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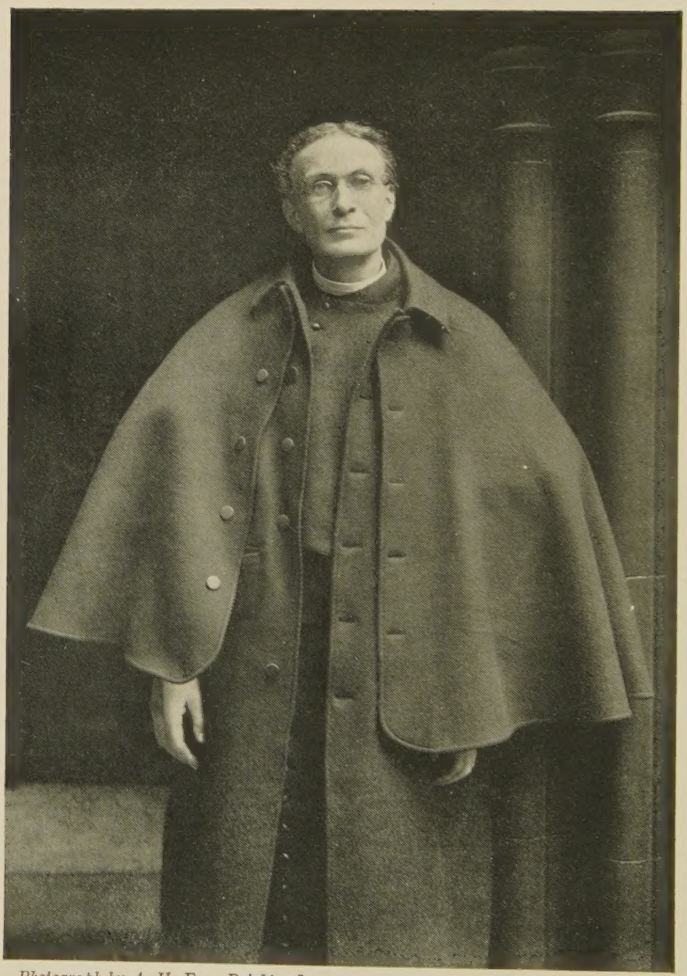

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THE REV. WILLOUGHBY CARTER, CHAPLAIN, C.D.L.

Julian D. Hamlin
Phila. 1919.

INTO THE DEEP

BEING THE STORY OF THE FIRST
FIVE YEARS OF THE CONFRATERNITY
OF THE DIVINE LOVE

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE VOCATION OF THE SOUL"

WITH 10 ILLUSTRATIONS

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To

OUR DEAR FATHER IN GOD,

WHOSE UNFAILING PATIENCE
AND WISDOM
HAVE AT ALL TIMES
UPHELD AND GUIDED US
THROUGH THE DAYS OF OUR PILGRIMAGE
IN THE CONFRATERNITY,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED.

ALL SAINTS',
1917.

FOREWORD

THE following pages relate the history of a religious movement which appears to have established its claim to be from God. The growth of the movement during the five years of its life, apart from the work which it has accomplished, is a guarantee that it possesses the capacity for permanence and development, that it strikes in upon modern life just where a void existed, and gives itself to fill that void.

The story possesses a fascination; it is told with clearness and decision; pathos and humour each play their part, and through it all an utter dependence upon God is plainly visible.

A great religious teacher of the last century once wrote, "It is delicious to put one's foot through the lath and plaster of old affectations, to make room for the granite walls of reality"; certainly his own methods were framed in accordance with this sentiment; the aim of the Confraternity of Divine Love, and of its Order of Sisters, may be described as being of the same fashion, "the granite walls of reality" are their aspiration and their shelter. To abandon the idea that the accumulation of wealth is an indispensable

preliminary to the accomplishment of work for God, to depend upon the beneficence of God, to "seek the kingdom" and to know that "other things" will be added according to the Wisdom and Promise of the Most High—this is the granite wall against which the Confraternity and the Order invariably lean.

Hence it is that we look forward, on behalf of the Confraternity and its Order, in the confidence of faith to a future of high promise for the welfare of such and the glory of God.

WILLOUGHBY CARTER.

FEAST OF ST. LUKE,
1917.

INTRODUCTORY

It is the bounden duty of any new Society which ventures to spring up to justify its existence within a reasonable period. This justification must be founded upon the existence of a genuine need, and the proved power of the Society in some measure to meet that need. It must likewise give evidence of continuity, so that it may not suddenly crumble to the ground, and leave its supporters looking foolish amid the ruins.

Probably the best judge as to whether any new endeavour possesses these qualifications, apart from the test of time, is that section of the public which best understands the particular aims the Society attempts to realize. The difficulty, however, that confronts a religious society is that every one professes to possess the qualifications necessary for criticism; and all that is professedly religious has to bear the brunt of criticism from every side—from the "man in the street" as well as from theological experts. It must appeal to the devout, and also to the sceptic; it must gain the confidence of the episcopacy, and must attract the most desponding amongst sinners. Its task, in short, is not an easy one.

Nevertheless, all this points to the fact that interest in religion lies at the heart of our nation, and all nations. And even if there is a wide difference in our varied points of view, there exists also a genuine intuition with regard to what is real and true. Worth is generally recognized and allowed to stand, and perhaps becomes all the stronger for the criticism which has brought to light many points of weakness.

There may, however, be days in the early life of a society when it is by no means coddled or flattered. It makes its entrance into a busy world, and gets in the way sometimes of older established societies that count the ground exclusively their own. "What is this?" they exclaim, not unkindly, "what is it doing here? We understand all about this matter, there is no need for anything new." And so the infant venture is jostled and not given very much room in which to breathe. Then comes the test of its vitality; it may die of discouragement, it may wither from criticism, it may be strangled by obstructions, or it may grow by inherent life quietly, almost imperceptibly, and may find its true place in God's great scheme of things.

Well for us if we realize all this before we venture out upon some new undertaking. If there is a sincere conviction within our hearts we shall be willing to persevere through the struggle of the early days, and if we are wise we shall see in those struggles just the very secret of our future strength. Nothing kills the vigour of youth so effectually as enervating surroundings and flattery; and if we love the work we desire to see established, we shall be thankful if its early life is not marked with too

great prosperity. Another great lesson we may learn by such efforts towards existence is humility. God's Kingdom is so great and we are so infinitesimally small. We see other established societies wane and fall, why should we live? We realize God uses some great movement for a time, and then it passes away, for its work is done: such may be our fate; but God's work goes on, His Church survives, His Kingdom is increased. It is all so infinitely great and vast, and we learn with thankfulness to turn from the small effort of our own individuality, to be absorbed in the greatness of His work, and aspiration; and to realize there is after all only one work and one Worker—Jesus Christ Himself!

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I

THE CONCEPTION OF THE CONFRATERNITY

" God's sons, we would not with His Will contend,
Nor strip one blossom from Truth's sacred stalk,
Content that He who hath designed our end
Hath marked the limits within which we walk."

A. Eubule-Evans.

In the spring of 1903 three friends peculiarly united in faith and aspirations were drawn to consider the need of workers in the great district of Fulham. Neither were pledged irrevocably to any especial work, two were absolutely free to respond to any need, the third partially so. Without any especial call the fact fastened itself upon their minds that here was a large district of industrial life, with new churches springing up to meet the needs of new parishes, but with evidently very few inhabitants who would have any leisure to devote themselves to parish work of any kind whatever.

After some interval of prayer and consultation the Bishop of London was approached, to ask him whether he would consent to a very tiny effort being made to form a settlement which would at present consist of only two and a half members. He wrote back cordially, referring us to the Bishop of Kensington (Dr. Ridgway), and saying there was a very real need and they would welcome any practical proposal.

How alarming Bishops were to us at that time it is not necessary to say, nor will we state whether they have been more or less alarming to us since; suffice it to say that an appointment was given to meet the Bishop of Kensington on a special day at St. James's, Piccadilly, and the promoters of the scheme would have thankfully accepted transportation for life in the interval.

On the Sunday prior to the interview two of us were in an old Sussex church. It was the Fifth Sunday after Trinity. The wonderful Gospel was read which included the words, "Launch out into the deep." As we left the church, one said to the other, "That shall be our motto." And the motto it has since for ever been. We might here note that ten years afterwards we both found ourselves again in that Sussex village. We remembered we had not been there on a Sunday since 1903. Alluding to the tremendous changes we had seen during those years, and realizing the change above all in ourselves, we entered the church. The Gospel was the same one containing the words, "Launch out into the deep." We were both impressed with the fact, but one felt quite a supernatural power attached to the repetition of that message and it was remembered with significance during the events which followed so soon afterwards.

The interview with the kindly Bishop put the proposal for the tiny settlement upon an excellent basis. We were all to separate for the summer holidays, and upon our return to town the Bishop proposed to give us introductions to the leading Fulham clergy, and with his blessing and approval we were to launch forth.

During the following two months pilgrimages were taken down into the neighbourhood to reconnoitre ; and the end of all the expeditions seemed to be *The Grey'ound*. It seemed a kind of centre from whence all the Fulham poor directed your steps.

"You know the Grey'ound ?" "You comes round by the Grey'ound." "When you see the Grey'ound." Now, near the Grey'ound was often met a vicar whom we named "the cheery parson," for on the wettest, muddiest, most Fulhamite day he always had a smile which cheered the most despondent mood. We have since learnt we were not the only souls that knew the power of Father Johnson's smiles ! The cheery parson belonged to St. Alban's Church, and we secretly hoped that our first centre would be in St. Alban's parish.

The next development, however, was a most unexpected one. In the autumn a letter was received from the Bishop, asking us to come and see him. He then told us that Mrs. Creighton had communicated with the Bishop of London with regard to a proposed settlement in Fulham. His wish was that we should fall in with her proposals and seek to be attached to her scheme, as of course it was certain of success.

However, in an interview the Bishop kindly arranged between us and Mrs. Creighton at Hampton Court, we learnt that she was not intending to actually start work possibly for two years. As she kindly told us of her plans, we saw that any movement on our part in that neighbourhood at that time would be the greatest possible mistake. She was evidently the one for the establishment

of the settlement, and our right course was to withdraw. We like to remember how very reluctant the Bishop of Kensington was to accept our resignation and how he hoped, to use his own words, "something might yet come of it," a wish which later years certainly saw realized; but for the moment the door was closed. Our feeling at the time was that we might have been called to prayer in preparation for a larger scheme of work than that which we could have undertaken.

Fulham was written deeply in our hearts, and we continued to pray that all God willed for its future good should be carried out, whoever His instruments might be.

All this took place in 1903; we none of us undertook any other special work, although there was, of course, always much to do. In the summer of 1904 the writer received her call to the Religious Life, and entered one of our large Communities. With this step we all three finally abandoned any thought of work in Fulham, which until that time had still lingered in our minds.

It was all the very best thing that could have happened; the six years that immediately followed, 1904–1910, were years of wonderful discipline in character to us all. God only knew how we needed them. Activity in outside work was at a standstill, but experience of the best possible kind was gained, and it was only one more instance of the blessing of God's "shut doors." Three years later another of the three was called to the Religious Life; the other was still needed in her home life.

Then followed a period of strenuous mission work. Wonderful days in which the spiritual

A Mission Street.

condition of the people and the unspiritual condition of the people were burnt into one's soul. The details do not belong to this narrative and must not take up space; but the condition of things was one we are familiar with: two sides of the parish divided by a river, in actual fact, divided much more effectually by the difference in social condition. The respectable, well-to-do class on one side, the failures, the dockers, and the submerged upon the other; and the Church standing between the two, attended, in a measure, by the one, almost entirely neglected by the other. It was in that place the great fact was realized by us so intensely that it was impossible to get that poorer side to church. Its language was unintelligible to them. Services designed for communicants were boring to a degree to those who had not learnt yet to love God; and individual effort was baulked continually by the need of a real genuine Mission Service which would really attract the people.

We realized that individual visiting was not sufficient. Good as it may be, we needed also the witness of united gatherings for prayer and worship, with the clear, simple instruction in the faith such as the people love. It needed the *atmosphere* where "two or three are gathered together" in His Name: it is the strength of such gatherings of witness which pierces the hearts of those who often desire to love God, and to be lifted out of their degradation and shame. If they are confronted by a Prayer-book Service and a conventional congregation they feel hopelessly at sea, and long never to be found there again. Is it not so?

Well, we thought it was. And several of us used to meet and dream dreams, and indeed made practical efforts too, efforts which in the end died from necessity, not from any choice of ours. We met in our mission room and prayed and conferred, and doubtless made mistakes ; but we were terribly in earnest, and the love of God for souls burnt more and more deeply in our hearts.

As we write now we pause pen in hand. One of that band has been lost sight of, apparently she has not fulfilled her end. Of the other four, one is at work as an assistant priest in a large parish of London, and three have passed beyond, having loved not their lives unto the death—Frederick Brown, destined for Africa ;—James Langdale, destined for a Contemplative :—both killed at the Front ; Sister Agnes, called to be the first sister of our now established Order to represent us beyond the veil !

How vividly now do we all realize that those early mission days, born only to fail apparently, were in reality the foundation of all that followed in the fulfilment of our consecration to God's service !

For us all, Cardiff was " closed down " in 1912, our group was scattered, but the bond which bound us together was never to be broken.

The Confraternity now appears upon the scene. During a Retreat the last week of July, the thought of all we had been realizing was borne more strongly than ever in upon our minds. The Life of St. Francis gave the final touch. How well we remember the day and hour—the Ft. of St. Peter's Chains—when, putting down the volume of that wonderful life, for the first time our Confraternity

prayer was breathed to Heaven, literally with eyes raised to the great blue vault overhead. "Baptize us, O God, with the Holy Ghost, and kindle in our hearts the fire of Thy Love."

Yes, that was what we needed! Returning to London, we talked things over and proposed that three or four of us should unite in praying that prayer, and should call ourselves by the name of the Confraternity. We decided to ask others to pray also, but that we would form no society, nor have any enrolment. For convenience we decided to print the prayer upon a slip of paper, and we drew the Cross for a design upon this slip, setting in the centre of it the Heart containing the Holy Name. It was all so simple, so entirely without any idea whatever that it would ever meet any especial need, or appeal to any number; but within a fortnight between twenty and thirty others had joined us, and had spoken of the simplicity and beauty of the idea. Still, there we left it: no definite idea had formed within our minds. Then totally unexpectedly, on St. Bartholomew's Day, the Call came. Of those secret hours with God alone the soul cannot venture to speak. It is enough to say that whereas at one hour one knew nothing, before another had passed the course of one's whole life was changed, by one of those marvellous interior illuminations which bring conviction by their perfect simplicity and calm. "God spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast."

Great mystic theologians tell us we do not dishonour God when in all humility we believe we *may* be mistaken as to an interior locution, and so we may well test the voice by discipline and the

lapse of time. For such a momentous step as this involved, the leaving of the Community in which one had been professed (although the Vow of Stability had not been taken), the launching forth to found an Order and a Society which in itself was such a stupendous responsibility, the absolute dependence upon God for all resources to establish an untried Society—all this rose vividly before the mind, together with the realization that there would probably not be a single soul in the whole world who would really believe one had received such a call, or approve of such a step.

Those succeeding days were such as can never be forgotten. Spent as they were, outwardly engaged in all the organizations of parochial life, inwardly in unceasing prayer, they will remain for ever as some of the most remarkable and most spiritually intense of one's whole life ; and as is so characteristic of the Divine Working, they were days of no emotion whatever; simply blind obedience and naked faith, with no further communication from God. But the vocation remained, an unquestionable conviction which nothing could ever shake.

II

THE BIRTH OF THE CONFRATERNITY

" Be sure no earnest work
Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much
It is not gathered as a grain of sand
To enlarge the sum of human action used
For carrying out God's end."

E. B. Browning.

The supposition that there would probably be no one who would believe that a call had really been given to found the Confraternity on a permanent basis was fully justified during the ensuing months. After a due time had been given to quiet prayer, in order interiorly to test the permanence of the conviction, a letter was sent to the authorities of the Community to ask for permission to test the value of the idea. The reply was a very kind but definite refusal to countenance any such thing, coupled with an earnest entreaty that the whole subject might be put away as a temptation from the enemy. As circumstances made it impossible to meet the Superior for several months, that time was specified as an opportunity to overcome any such unsettling idea, and to resolutely determine to continue the work then appointed to one in the North.

The only further move that was made, therefore, as the weeks passed by and the vocation

only deepened, was to write to a priest who is pre-eminently fitted to answer any question upon the Religious Life, and who has a very comprehensive knowledge of the history of Religious Orders, and to place before him as clearly as possible the whole position. This was done, and his answer, although tentative of course, was the only real encouragement that was given in those first difficult months. He saw in the statement the possibility of a special vocation, and encouraged hope that ultimately God would open the way if one continued in fidelity and obedience meanwhile.

No progress otherwise was made for four months, but at the end of that time the conviction was far stronger, and the whole future of the Confraternity and the Order of Sisters was as clear and definite in one's mind as though one had read its foundation, scope and rule in a book, and was simply called upon to carry out what was before one's eyes. Every detail ranged itself out most clearly without any personal effort of thought, and its destiny filled the whole horizon of the future.

It was with this consciousness of absolute conviction that I came up to London to meet the Bishop who had received one's professed vows, and who could alone really sanction any strong action. The scheme was laid before him, and he gave his most hearty approval of all that was proposed, together with some valuable suggestions, and some definite instruction. I told his lordship the Community did not approve of my desire to leave, nor did they believe in my fitness to carry out the proposed work, with which latter fact I entirely agreed. But it did not seem to me the

choice of the leadership rested with me! His lordship answered that he thought I could hardly expect any Community to agree with the ideas which differed from their own ideals. So far, however, he gave permission for me to leave with the sanction, although not with the approval, of my Community, on condition that I formed an Order to which I could be attached within a reasonable time after leaving, or joined another Community if our plans were found to be impracticable. With this proviso of course one heartily concurred. His lordship also himself kindly made inquiries, as we were most anxious to do, as to whether any Community was already in existence which in any way realized our ideals, in which case we should be only too anxious to join them instead of endeavouring to multiple new enterprises.

In a subsequent interview with the Rev. Mother of my own Community I put the whole matter again before her and asked the pointed question as to whether if we waited and did nothing for a period even of years, or as long as she should appoint, she would in the end believe it was a real call. The answer was in the negative, but she added, she felt that I was so firmly resolved in my own mind that I was to do it that she believed it to be impossible for me to settle down again where I was, therefore she said she felt they must consent to my departure but would never approve.

With her permission I further took counsel with two other priests, one being our present Chaplain, and they considered under the circumstances I could take no other course but leave, and so the matter was decided, and the date of my departure

left to be fixed by the Rev. Mother. This eventually proved to be April 8, 1913.

During the period of three months which remained I agreed to do nothing whatever about the future, and to tell no one of our intentions. I therefore ceased even my correspondence with the Bishop, only, with the Mother's aid and sanction, still made inquiries as to the rule of other societies —in fact, it was suggested that I should even go and stay in one or two. However, these proposals were not carried out by the arrangements of the societies themselves.

A remarkable instance, however, occurred during those months. I was, through parish work, brought into contact with the vicar of a neighbouring church, and discovered to my great surprise that he was the late vicar of St. Alban's, Fulham, the "cheery parson" in fact. He spoke quite naturally of his former parish, and I told him of the early dream of a settlement working there. He remarked: "How I wish you were working there now!" Seeing in the circumstances a very remarkable feature, I told him of our position as it was at that time, and that it was our intention to seek some such sphere in which to test the value of our Confraternity. He immediately said, "May I write to the present vicar?" Impressing upon him the absolute promise I was under personally to do nothing in the matter until I left that Community, I told him that if he cared to write and describe something of what our aims for the future were, and that we greatly desired to make our centre in some poor district, notably in Fulham, we should be only too thankful if we might have something

in view. Therefore, the letter was written by him without giving any clue as to the Community or individuality of the Sister who was likely to be free. The answer came by return.

"Your letter was a Godsend. My present lady-workers are leaving and I have written to several Communities asking whether they can send Sisters, all to no effect. I should be only too glad to hear more of the Sister you write to me about."

Here then was a wonderful link in the chain of God's Providence. Exactly ten years after we had relinquished the hope of working in that precise parish, without any effort whatever of our own we were apparently to be led back to that very place; and by the hand of its former vicar.

There seems no reason for dwelling longer upon these intervening days. They were difficult ones, and at times very sad ones; but throughout there were those wonderful tokens of the Providence of God which bore in upon our hearts the knowledge that He was with us, guiding, controlling, preparing. Never for one moment did one's star fail to shine on the darkest night. We had but to follow.

Often and often when it was suggested with somewhat forcible expressions how totally unfit one was to attempt so stupendous a work, I would go wearily enough into the church which had witnessed so much, and falling on my knees in utter abandonment cry from the depths of my soul, "I *know*, O God, how well I know!" concurring so entirely with the accusation of total inefficiency, only falling back upon the thought commonly attributed to St. Francis, that in starting his Order

God chose the most hopeless person He could find, in order that all the glory should be of God and nothing of man.

As one looked back upon the nine years spent in Community life all the failures, all the infidelity that marked those years assumed gigantic proportions; and yet—there was the remembrance of that interior Voice which had spoken and which could not be gainsayed.

Through all those early months since the call had been realized there had been almost nothing but discouragement and utter isolation, nevertheless one saw with wonderful clearness that, had the idea been received with human encouragement, there could not have been such a clear realization of the call of God. One would have become confused by the approval of human friends, and might have been doubtful afterwards as to whether one had listened to the voice of man and followed one's own inclination.

But although it is with reluctance that we ever raise the veil which conceals the hours of our deepest intensity of feeling, it is well now to record a crisis in those days when upon a memorable night one entered dimly into the agony of St. Paul as he recorded "No man stood with me"—letters of warning and regret had brought the realization that to be true to this venture of faith would be to go against the approval of every human friend. It was after the forlornness of that hour that writing to the almost strange priest saved one from thinking the whole thing was a mistake. So again the star did not fail to shine on the darkest night.

How one thanks God now for that hour of

desolation producing in the soul the conviction which was expressed in the prayer, "O God, I have no one but Thee. If this is Thy Voice calling me, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters, and I will step forth from all and come?" And in the depths of my heart I knew He had answered, "Come."

III

OUR IDEALS

"And deign, O Watcher with the sleepless brow,
Pathetic in its yearning—deign reply:
Is there, oh is there aught that such as Thou,
Wouldest take from such as I?

"Are there no briars across Thy pathway thrust?
Are there no thorns that compass it about?
Nor any stones that Thou wilt deign to trust
My hands to gather out?

"What though unmarked the happy workman toil
And break, unthanked of man the stubborn clod?
It is enough, for sacred is the soil,
Dear are the hills of God."

JEAN INGELOW.

GOD'S preparation in a soul is often so unconscious, that it is only long afterwards we realize how much we have been learning. It was markedly so at this time. Inasmuch as the idea had never entered one's head of ever being brought to lead any movement such as an Order or a Confraternity, there had never been any conscious thought with regard to the details necessary to such a work, or especial training required.

When the future became clear, there came also the realization that unconsciously to one's self the ideals had been forming all the time, and when the hour for action drew near, the preparation seemed to have been made to a very great extent. We so often do not see at the time why God leads a soul

in so many different ways, why one work is checked and experience in another given; but at this time a most wonderful harmony in all one's past life appeared. Many mysterious experiences were made perfectly plain. Standing at last face to face with a future to which one had been led all along, for the first time in life there was the sense of having reached a final goal.

What, then, were some of these ideals we hoped to see realized?

There was, first of all, the conception of the Confraternity itself. A wide and simple body closely united in fellowship of faith and love, yet not embarrassed with any burdensome rules for intercessory prayer or the devotional life. This, we felt, should enable those who were already attached to existing societies such as our great missions to co-operate in fellowship with others so that their union of prayer might be wider than that of their own society, and they might have the strength of our prayer for the greater realization of the love of God strengthening and deepening their own work wherever they might be; and so through our organization those of different societies might be brought into closer fellowship one with another. For this end there should be no subscription and no rule which should exclude any one from uniting with us. Then as the object was to realize more deeply the love of God, we felt that we must be ready as a Confraternity to put that ideal into practice wherever we might be: we must be prepared to respond to every call of love which might meet us in any direction, in order to realize the answer to our own prayer. How that developed we shall see later on.

There appeared also the possibility of an Order of Sisters who should be under a Religious Rule, but one so simple in its demands upon the daily life that it would not prohibit the necessary readiness to respond to any unusual call for service. This would be possible, it was felt, by a sharing of responsibility and a close co-operation among the Sisters. The Offices, for instance, would be sung, but the individual responsibility might be merged into the corporate responsibility, so that there should be no burden resting upon the individual and arrears of devotion to be made up if she were by the necessity of loving service called elsewhere. In the same way it was felt that we should more perfectly realize our ideal if we lived in small groups, so that there would be no feeling of being cut off from the people in a large institution ; and also there would be no necessity for the larger number of restrictions absolutely essential in the government of a considerable body.

There appeared to be a need to guard against a Community losing sight of its own end, *i.e.* devotion to God and loving service to His people, and to become engrossed in its own body. This must always be a danger where the company is a large one with an important centre. To scatter into smaller groups would surely tend to reduce this danger very considerably.

It was of immense value to find that one great leader in the Religious Life, St. Teresa, strongly advocated this measure. In her decision that no house of her Rule should contain more than thirteen nuns we see her great spirit of caution. As we study her writings we see what stress she lays upon

this as a principle. In small groups the unity of Sisters in one spiritual family can be maintained, and we must always remember that very large bodies of one sex, living a common life, being an unnatural condition of things, must be a very difficult ship to steer unless the spirit amongst them is extraordinarily supernatural; and for the most part, alas, we are not extraordinarily supernatural.

Then there arose in our minds the question of poverty. What does the vow of poverty entail?

There are two generally accepted courses. One that the Community may possess invested funds, and the individual may not; or the other view, that the Community may not possess any invested property, but that the individual members may, so long as he or she does not retain the right of personal distribution, or what is called a "private purse." But there is surely a third course which is more rarely followed, namely, that the vow of poverty should entail the relinquishing of all invested property or storing up for the future; giving a very literal interpretation to the injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," and many other passages in the New Testament which can only bear one interpretation, namely, an absolute dependance upon God for the needs of the present time. This seemed to us to be the ideal we should accept if we were going to take the vow at all; and to be, for us at least, the only consistent one.

Difficulties arising therefrom were presented to our minds, but these were only such as undoubtedly the disciples had in their time to face as they were trained in the heavenly Wisdom of their Master.

One can imagine the countenance of many hard-headed business men in our own time if they were instructed to fetch the wherewithal to pay a tax out of a fish's mouth! Yet those who have launched out into the deep of God's Providence and a life of faith learn to see in these strangely unworldly procedures, laws which are not of this world's wisdom, but which belong none the less definitely to the code of a spiritual Kingdom. The fish was typical of the Church in its early history, and from her mouth have her children ever been fed as they have trusted in her and walked in the steps of her divine Lord.

This question of poverty further appeared to us to affect greatly the question of the distribution of money in charitable relief. Ought Sisters to accept the responsibility of this? We felt unhesitatingly sure that they should not.

An immense amount has been written in late times upon reform in parochial relief and the intense importance of co-operation and properly organized methods, with most of which we most heartily concur; and we thus absolutely felt that the spiritual work which a Sister has an immense opportunity to do is marred beyond measure if she is at the same time acting the part of an amateur relieving officer, which we too often have done. The argument is so often brought up that our Blessed Lord relieved the needs of the body,—He *healed* the body, did He ever give away money? What did St. Peter say, "Silver and gold have I none, such as I have give I thee"; this was in answer to the beggar who asked for alms. Organized relief there was in the early Church, carefully

distributed by the body, not the individual. In these matters of social condition, however, every century must have its special developments; is it not better that Sisters in Religion should leave the matter alone, as being outside their sphere, if they are to be effectual in their work?

At any rate, in our conception of the Order of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, we felt that the most directly spiritual result would be attained through carrying our absolute poverty into all our work, and separating ourselves entirely from the possession of accumulated property in buildings or invested income; in the making of money in payment for any of our works; and in the distribution of money. This would entail the using within a reasonable period any sum of money given to us for the support of ourselves or our work: the rule of not taking payment for any service rendered, offering it all solely and only as an act of love to God without earthly remuneration of any kind; and the disability to be the distributor of any individual gift or the agent for any charitable relief.

There were details in the government of our Society which presented itself also to our mind as being of immense value: recognizing the principle that the masculine mind would be an added strength to the feminine in our councils, we desired to see an Advisory Council of priests and others in sympathy with our aims, and with the Religious Life, which should receive the reports of the Council Sisters in all matters of importance and confirm them before they should be put into action.

We have touched more especially upon the features of the proposed Order than upon the special

aims of the Confraternity, because it was in connection with the Religious Order that the most critical questions would arise. Naturally that would be more open to criticism; and need greater foresight than a Society of more general aims, owing to its interior and spiritual character. Nevertheless we felt from the beginning that the union between the Order and its parent Confraternity should be an intensely close one; and that they should be a mutual strength to each other, the daughter being a spiritual centre which should safeguard all the activities of the Confraternity, and the Confraternity reaching out on all sides to gather in fresh recruits to perceive the beauty of a life of consecration to God, whether under the Evangelical vows or in the sphere of civil life.

These were some of the deep realizations of that seven months. Open to criticism? Yes, of course they were; for are we not always learning, always doubting, and always questioning? But surely in every effort we are rising nearer to the truth which lies at the heart of all things, and every individual representation of truth as we perceive it is necessary to the perfection of God's Kingdom on earth, and contributing its microscopic beauty to the glory of the Redeemer.

To this end we felt we were not venturing to find fault with any existing method, as some thought we were. God forbid! We were venturing forth only to add to the number of existing methods in order that perhaps our tiny witness might save some soul to whom it might appeal. Some needed us then, some we feel need us now. That is all we

desire. God is so infinite, there is room for every star which may shine forth from His firmament each in its own place, moving in its own order, borrowing its light from the one Infinite Source without detriment to any other star. Each may be the individual light which reaches some stray soul.

IV

THE FIRST VENTURE

" These are the passing changes, in which the soul is intended to learn . . . to be true to Him . . . trusting His designs though it understand them not."

T. T. CARTER.

WHEN we speak of depending upon the Providence of God alone for the supplying of all our need, there are some who seem to connect a certain laziness of mind with the idea. They seem to look upon it as a sort of excuse for making no effort of our own. " To live by faith " has at times been the expression used by some whose manner of life we may deprecate, but we must remember that faith, to be real faith, is a very difficult thing indeed, needing constantly renewed efforts of the will. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us it is the " evidence of things not seen." [1] It is a matter of growth, as the will has ever to make fresh efforts of response as fresh trials are put upon it.

So with such a life as that we purposed for ourselves we realized that God would call upon us by the existence of trials to increase our faith in Him, and to prove His sufficiency. We might trust Him, and we humbly hope we did; but we could not know with any certainty of fact how He would lead us in the coming days, and the weakness of our

[1] Heb. xi. 1.

spiritual character often trembled before a future which was so uncertain as ours was at that time.

So in the closing weeks before the date came for actually leaving the Community and venturing forth, the question did arise—where to go? and upon what one was going to live? seeing that any money one had ever possessed had been disposed of long ago. No plans were allowed to be made, and as we were starting forth upon what the human understanding would undoubtedly account a most perilous adventure, it was equally certain we were not going to fall back upon the generosity of relatives or friends.

But God was overruling, and some weeks before the date actually arrived a cheque for fifty pounds was received from a very dear friend who nevertheless was more than alarmed at the undertaking itself. So the immediate future was supplied with all that was needful. Nevertheless the strain of that time was very great, and increased by many influences of which one can never speak. It was little wonder that one's first instinct upon coming up to London was the intense desire to hide away in solitude, and recover from a very great amount of fatigue. With our Bishop's sanction given in January the habit was changed to the proposed one of the new Order, and the first weeks were spent in solitude and prayer.

It will be remembered how during the waiting period in the North the prayer, "If it be Thou, bid me come, Lord, unto Thee upon the waters," was impressed most deeply upon our hearts. The Sunday in the week I came to town, the Lesson at Mattins contained that passage; the first sermon

I ever heard in St. Alban's Church, when I went there before entering the parish, was again on the same text. It is so immensely significant the way God thus uses passages of Scripture to impress home His desire for us. Upon each occasion the words, "And He said, Come," were such a wonderful encouragement and peace.

It was of course necessary at once to let friends know all the proposals that had up to that time been kept secret, and especially to write to those whom we had great reason to believe would join the new Order. They were desiring the Religious Life, and were heartily in sympathy with our especial aims. There were three we were almost confident would come. But they did not. It was quite natural, the venture was too uncertain, all the excellent advice given to them by friends tended to persuade them they would be most unwise to trust their future to an untried scheme: they had much better attach themselves to an established Society. Then two others unexpectedly came and offered themselves, and it seemed as though they were sent to take the place of the old. A short while elapsed for consideration and one was again persuaded by her friends not to come; and the other we refused because of her obvious attraction to the Roman Church, although she stoutly denied it; she has since gone over, so we have been thankful we were cautious at the time.

This was all very wise and excellent according to human judgment, and if it continued it did not seem particularly likely we should ever be established.

Meanwhile the time was not to be wasted.

Photograph by Drinkwater Butt, F.R.P.S.]

THE REV. G. G. ELLIOTT.

There were many things our new Rule would necessitate us learning how to do; for all the work necessary for our daily maintenance and comfort was to be done by the Sisters themselves without domestic aid, so as soon as it was possible a tiny flat of three rooms was taken in Twynholme Mansions, Fulham Cross, a lovely little flat from the missionary point of view, right in the heart of the poorest part of Fulham.

Previously, however, to that, our first call was made upon the Rev. G. G. Elliott, who had asked Mr. Johnson to send us to him. Truly we had little to tell. We had left our old diocese, coming by necessity to London, we had no prospect of any immediate novitiate, and we were practically unknown. It was true we possessed one friend in London of value in the ecclesiastical world—subsequently our dear Chaplain the Rev. Willoughby Carter—but one only. With this wholly encouraging statement of our position we called upon the vicar of St. Albans and told him quite candidly the extremely precarious footing upon which we stood and that no priest in the world could be expected to welcome us into his parish; at the close we said, "Do you still desire to have us when we can come?" The answer was, "More than ever, please." It was charming, and it touched us very deeply, striking the first note of a chord of friendship which we trust may never be broken.

It was agreed nothing should be attempted until September, but that observation of the parish and its needs should be made during the summer from the tiny flat, just outside the parish, at Fulham Cross.

Those were very memorable days, fraught with deep lessons. The solitude, although giving grave scandal to respectable Church traditions, was immensely beneficial at the entrance to an untried endeavour. In that little top flat, with the kindly if at times riotous neighbours all around to whom one was a grave perplexity, many experiments were made in simplicity of diet upon economical lines, and in thinking out the safeguarding of the Religious Life in conjunction with a life lived amongst the people. Many friends came down, to climb those grubby stairs, picking their way through cats and babies, and lively remonstrances took place between the inmate of the flat and the visitors when they came clad in too gay garments or jewels.

"It's all right, Sister," cried two charming girls one day; "you needn't worry about being seen with us, they will only think you are saving our souls. It's our reputations that will suffer, not yours."

Almost immediately our work commenced. We were made probation officer for a prison case, and by the kindly welcome of the existing workers at St. Alban's the parishioners began to call.

Then came an invitation to go up and speak to the mill girls at Leek; and we went for what proved an eventful visit. Several meetings had been arranged, and one of these was for the communicants of All Saints' Church. One of the devout members of that church had long desired to enter a Community, and the vicar was in correspondence with several thereon. Hearing of our new venture he bade her wait until I had been, and at the close of my address he said, "Go and see the Sister in the morning; you may find your vocation there."

So on the morrow, unexpectedly, she came, and described what her position was. She said all was arranged with her home, and she felt deeply convinced in her own heart she was to come and prove her vocation with us. This was in August, and early in September she arrived, not to our little flat in Twynholme Mansions, for in preparation for this real start we had taken a workman's flat actually in the Greyhound Road, that place of so many memories.

The flat possessed four rooms. A sitting-room, which served as a parish room, a study which was transformed into a bedroom at night, an additional tiny bedroom, and the kitchen, which was practically our living-room. 125A, Greyhound Road, will always constitute our ideal for a Mission flat, so many blessed memories cling around it.

Then we really started. We divided our hours between domestic work and the parish, and contrived as far as possible to make it the home of our people as well as ourselves. As we were of course no Order yet, the leader was given the title and admitted in Church as the Rev. Sister Warden of the Confraternity, an office which lasted for three and a half years.

The expediency arose of having us recognized as workers in the diocese, so Mr. Elliott kindly had an interview granted for us with the Bishop of Kensington, who gave some very practical counsel and his blessing; there was of course no question brought up then as to our future position, that had all to be developed, and we could only be recognized as workers, which we were only too thankful to be.

All the unfailing courtesy which the vicar of

St. Alban's has always shown to us and to our Confraternity smoothed the way for us on every side; but it need scarcely be said that opponents were not wanting; and we have reason to believe he had many battles to fight on our behalf in those early days. Some came to our knowledge, doubtless there were many which only came to his; but we plodded on, and he shouldered the burden. We knew one day we should win through the storms and pass into calmer waters.

From the earliest conception we had decided our habit should be the colour of St. Francis's sparrows: grey and brown, and it was so made. Amongst ourselves we were always called the sparrows. One day as I had just received an extra crushing blow I was walking down the Greyhound Road, and I observed a sparrow attempting to eat a crust in the road. Struck with the scene I watched it. Again and again it was driven off by foes on every side, traffic, passers-by, and other birds; but it persisted, and in the end accomplished its desire. I remember that sparrow and the encouragement it instilled into my heart that day!

Our poverty was very real, but we were never without the means of sustenance. Sometimes we came to our last pound. One day we remember we had drawn all out of the bank that was possible without closing the account altogether; that afternoon a visitor called of whom we had never heard; but she loved Sisters and was so glad to hear we had come that as she left she quietly laid a sovereign upon the table, and we went on again.

It does not seem especially necessary to relate too many instances of this sort; it was what was to

be expected as long as we pleased God in intention at least ; but on another memorable occasion when the exchequer was very low I was obliged to visit a wealthy house, and was asked how we carrried on our work.

" Do you beg ? "

" No, we never beg ! "

" Do you just trust to chance ? "

" Oh no—we *pray*. We believe if God wants our work it will be supported all right. We trust to Him."

" Well, you seem wonderfully cheerful over it."

As a matter of fact that was a day of very real effort of soul, more were joining us who were giving up their means of livelihood in order to come, and we had no reserve of funds. After I had left the house I wondered for a few moments. Had I overdone it ? One word of anxiety, or plea of poverty, and I am certain a cheque would have been given ; but I had only appeared cheerful and well-to-do ! Then the conviction came again that that was just how we ought to appear if our motto was " Trust in God." So I lifted up my heart to Him, and went home. On the table amongst my letters was a cheque from an absolute stranger for ten pounds. Laus Deo !

V

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

"God is working through His people: Christ is succouring through His friends; it is the vacancies in the ranks of His friends wherein the mischief lies—come and fill one gap."

A. F. WINNINGTON INGRAM.

THE Mission work in St. Alban's parish does not differ so materially from the Mission work elsewhere that we should feel justified in spending much time upon its description. It was admirably worked in point of relief, the vicar sharing our convictions as to the inadvisability of individual gifts, or indeed of any relief that was not carefully investigated, and all that is done is worked through a Committee and in co-operation with other agencies. This made the Sisters' position a perfectly clear one.

Naturally the girls fell at once under our notice, and from the commencement we kept our rooms open to them at all hours; with the result that in the evening as many as twenty and more would come in to our tiny sitting-room and use the floor when the chairs were all occupied. The more unorganized and natural this habit became the more good it did; and much was learnt by those girls sharing our home life with us in its extreme simplicity, but we hope cleanliness. Our rooms at times were cleaner, alas, before those dear young people entered them than afterwards. On one night we remember

knocking at Sister Miriam's door in a craving for human sympathy and ejaculating through the keyhole, "I have killed *eight*." "I am so glad," was the response, "there will be less of a crowd in your room now."

One of the effects, however, of those nightly gatherings expressed itself in a remark made by a mother who with a disapproving sniff said, "Our home don't seem clean enough for our Polly now; I guess you're making her too particler." We thought that augured well for Polly's future home.

We started systematically upon house-to-house visiting, choosing by preference the poorest districts first. The usual interesting results followed which led the Mission Sister to form some very clear impressions of the conditions of work amongst the poor; the persuasive power of patience and love, for instance. There was one three-storied house containing four families, in which Sister Miriam had won entrance to three, but an obdurate old woman occupied the top room. No, she would have none of us! She was left severely alone. How long she had listened over the balustrade to what went on below we know not, but at last one day when the Sister was saying good-bye to family No. 3, she heard a voice, "'i! yer can come up 'ere if yer like. *I* don't mind!" and the battle was won.

Then we worked on to our first Christmas Day. That was a red-letter one. We had preparation classes beforehand to teach our girls the meaning of the Christ Mass; and on the day itself they came round to the Mission each to don a white overall and the red hair-ribbon which had been given to them by two Associates. Their sweet, reverent

behaviour in church, and their remembrance of all we had told them about the solemn parts of the service stirred our hearts very deeply, it seemed so hopeful if we could retain a hold of them through these impressionable years.

In the afternoon we had invited all the lonely women we could find to tea. We will describe that as it appeared to one of our brothers who was suddenly inspired with the idea of giving us a Christmas call.

It was a foggy afternoon, very dark at four o'clock: he had not the slightest idea of our whereabouts, only our address, but was directed to 125A, Greyhound Road. Striking a match to investigate the numbers on the doors, he then groped his way up our tiny pitch-dark staircase and came upon some one else; lighting another match, it being pre-war times, he found his companion was a widow. He inquired for his sister. "I don't know where she is. She ain't in," answered the widow. "She invited me to tea at four o'clock, but I dessay it's not four yet." After exchanging a few more remarks in the dark, he descended the stairs cautiously and was accosted by a small boy.

"D'yer want Sisterelizbeth? She ain't in. I knows where she is. I'll tike yer there, if yer like."

Thanking him politely the caller decided to wait, as the widow's appointed hour of four o'clock was near. Seeing a tiny sweet-shop alongside, a bright idea struck him and he went in. Two urchins were before him.

"What's yer goin' to 'ave? Peppermints?"

"*No, I* ain't, I'm a goin' to 'ave a 'apporth o' corf drops."

However, the young woman turned to her more distinguished-looking visitor.

"Give me half-a-crown's worth of sweets, anything you like—mixed," he asked, but was not prepared for the expression on her face. After staring at him hard, she disappeared through a doorway at the back and he heard her say in a hushed voice of awe—

"'E wants 'alf-a-crown's worth o' sweets." Instantly a gentleman in shirt-sleeves emerged, and with his best bow did them up for so superior a customer.

Coming out of the shop, he ran into his sister coming home with a cripple on her arm, and other folk of very varied aspects gathered round her. They all tried to mount the little staircase together, but had to wait on the landing whilst the Sisters lighted up the Mission flat, then they came in, and such a transformation scene it proved from the fog and gloom outside.

In one room a sweet little Christmas Tree was lighted up to its full brilliance; and in the other a sumptuous tea was spread which was laden with the results of recreation hours on previous days. It was a tea so inviting that one afterwards heard loud complaints from a crushed sister-in-law who declared that when her husband returned from the "slums of Fulham" he looked with contempt upon his own well-spread tea-table and remarked, "I wish I'd had my tea at the Mission." The next day the Mission had a letter. "My dear, it's splendid; here's five pounds for you."

But nevertheless it is noteworthy to find that the poorest and most forsaken soul all the year

round seems to find some relative or friend on Christmas Day. We have often since tried to hunt up folk who have nowhere to go, but although our invitation has been received with gratitude, we have nearly always found an established custom of going to some especial place upon that day. And we are glad to find it is so. We like to think there are not many who are lonely on the birthday of Our Lord.

Close on the heels of this festal day came a night of tragedy, a sordid example of the realistic condition of the poor. A knock at 11.30; we asked through the letter slit, "Who is there?"—a necessary precaution where intoxicating liquors are not unknown.

"Mrs. White's dying, and is askin' for yer, can yer come? No. 118."

"All right; I will be round in five minutes."

Six people were in the tiny room, and obviously the poor woman was very bad. But oh, the horror of that dying face with all the results of hæmorrhage left untouched!

"Doctor's given 'er up, says she won't last the night."

Gently we persuaded the daughter to give her poor mother the chance of more air, and with firmness added, "She must sleep if possible, and she cannot sleep unless she is alone. I will call you if she gets worse." The poor docile souls, children always, recognizing as they ever do authority in any form, went into the next room, all except the husband whom we asked to stop. Then we went to the woman and bent over her. She whispered faintly, "I'm agoin', I can't sleep, I wish I could. I'm glad you've come."

An old trick practised years ago in one's home-life stood one again in good stead, but it meant endurance and patience. I rested my arm upon that hideous pillow and began a soothing stroke that had never failed me yet. Her expression softened at once. If I could but get her to sleep! Perfect stillness prevailed—the tall figure of the man seemed to enter into understanding of my hope, for two hours he never stirred. But, picture it, after the first five minutes, when already her staring eyes had closed and rest was creeping over the face, when I knew that any more I *dared* not move, I suddenly became aware that animals were creeping towards me from every direction: not one or two, but *dozens*. Where they did not crawl, they hopped! If ever I sent up a prayer for endurance I did then, but of course I knew it could be done, and when at length I knew by her breathing she really slept in peace, then thankfulness made it an easy task at intervals to brush them off my clothes! When after two hours she woke, and sucked some ice, I saw by the brightness of her smile she had passed the crisis.

"I'm better," she whispered; and I answered, "Yes, thank God, you are!" I left her as comfortable as I could at two o'clock, and outside the house, on the moonlit pavement of the Grey'ound Road, with no one to witness what she did, this little Sister shook and shook herself, and shook herself again!

But it was a festival of joy when I took Mrs. White up the church on my arm when she came to make her thanksgiving, and troubles of that sort seem very light when you see old eyes fill with

tears, and their owners point at you and say, " She saved my life."

Dear Mrs. White, she wasn't much of a triumph in many ways, her spiritual efforts were never very great, but yet one hopes that some day we may meet beyond, and renew that friendship which was a very close one in its way.

VI

EXTENSION

" O ye, who taste that love is sweet,
Set waymarks for all doubtful feet
That stumble on in search of it."

C. Rossetti.

Early in 1914 the prospect of another probationer made us wonder where she was to be housed, our Mission flat was naturally fully occupied. Well do we remember one night when a newcomer was put into the tiny bedroom. She had come bringing with her much that she considered would be useful. After we had retired for the night, such violent sounds emanated from her room we were forced to inquire into the cause. We found her putting her furniture into the kitchen ! "I am so sorry, Mother," she said, " but I thought if I might just put the furniture out for the night I could unpack my boxes and bring it back in the morning. I hoped you wouldn't hear." However, that very time a worker who was in the neighbourhood called and asked whether we would take over premises she had been using as a working men's club, which she was reluctantly bound to close. If we would like to take over the end of her agreement she would make us a present of all her fixtures and " plant." It was a generous and tempting offer in view of our overcrowded sitting-room at night. We viewed the rooms

and were delighted with them, and found upon inquiry that the upper part of the house could also be obtained, which would give us three bedrooms, an oratory, and a sitting-room. Negotiations were soon completed, and as the offer was made to us on the Feast of St. Catherine de Ricci, we dedicated the house to her. It was distempered, and gifts came in for our oratory, including our first altar, which will always be a very dear one to us. This was made for us of plain oak with our Confraternity Cross carved on it, and significant texts illuminated in gold. Our Chaplain came over and blessed the house and we were immensely pleased with our new acquisition—for a short time.

The rooms downstairs were open every night to the poor girls of the neighbourhood, and a very good number came in. The laundry girls were the fish we most wanted to catch, and we soon found they were going to be very difficult ones. However, we had a nucleus of them to begin with, and one evening were intensely amused by a certain "May," who stood in the doorway and grasped the jackets and collars of girls who passed by whom she knew. From within we heard, "Come in 'ere. (Struggles.) "I ain't comin'." "Yes, yer are; *come* in." "I ain't, I sy." "An' I sy yer *are;* come in." Then the fish was landed and brought to a game table and settled in with some cocoa. On another occasion we missed one to whom we had become accustomed, and meeting her in the street we asked her why she no longer came. The answer was—

"If you please, Sister, mother don't like me to come to such places as that." And we retired discomfited.

The First Altar, St. Catherine's.

It was a strange and significant fact, however, that with the opening of a *club-room* our numbers declined. This has made us realize that any kind of public footing destroyed something of the spirit of the *home* which they so appreciated in our first little room, and has led us to return to the original method. Of course we offered them no entertainments or dancing; and probably where they used a club-room at all they preferred to go where these more lively amusements were provided. It made us resolve not to compete with that kind of work at all, and we have since adopted only the more private methods.

But all too soon the blow fell. We had inadvertently announced in the magazine that there were rooms upstairs where the "*Sisters permanently slept,*" a remark which had caused very considerable amusement. The Sisters were vastly indignant at the aspersion upon their character; now this proved all the more bitter in its irony when the fact was soon discovered that the Sisters did not sleep "permanently" at all, owing to the previous inhabitants of that upper part. It was already occupied, they found, by hundreds of undesirable guests. When they were told they must immediately retire and that other accommodation would be at once provided, they each exclaimed, "Oh no, Mother, we must fight it out, we never shall if we retreat." Pleading for an extension of tenancy which was very reluctantly granted, two of them attacked the foe, with really heroic force. They persevered by night and by day; we took in quantities of mortar, soft soap, and paraffin, and worked at all the cracks. Humour saved us from

despair. How well I remember being arrayed in an overall, engrossed in hunting and slaying and plastering, and in the middle receiving a message through the locked door, "Please, Mother, C—— wants to know whether she can be admitted as a probationer on Whit-Monday."

"Yes," I responded, "but you will probably all be walled up with mortar, soft soap, and paraffin."

In the end we had to retire and apply to be released from the agreement. The landlord asked for three weeks for fumigation, we left the house in his possession. It was hermetically sealed, and the workman climbed a ladder to survey the effect of his fumigation inside. An ironmonger who was a great friend of ours and much annoyed at what he called a "let in" for us, stood below that ladder and with bitter scorn shouted up, "What's the matter, won't they let you get in?"—meaning, of course, the former inhabitants, not us.

We returned when it was pronounced clean—for one night—then we withdrew finally for ever. St. Catherine's had a short life and a very blessed one; it contributed an excellent test of vocation, for it had the result of sending one aspirant flying precipitately, and it taught us much in practical ways. A beautiful memory of that first dear little oratory, which remarkably remained untouched by the plague, was that it was the spot where God's call to the Religious Life reached our dear Sister Agnes who had hitherto been only our very best friend.

Circumstances therefore made it imperative to find more accommodation, and we saw that the really deep training necessary for the novitiate

St. Elizabeth's, Hanwell.

could not be given in a parish where our life was so irregular and open to public gaze as it was at St. Alban's. So after consultation with authorities we went to seek a house out towards Uxbridge where some measure of quiet could be obtained. The first we found was 49, Uxbridge Road, Hanwell. We went over it, and were immensely attracted by it, although we feared the rent would be too high, that was not so, however.

Another remarkable feature of God's leading revealed itself. We had been asked a year before to pray for a parish where a great work was being done for God's kingdom, and where it was hoped we might some day work. The parish was merely a name, we knew nothing of it. Walking out of the gate of this house to post a letter in a box, we found this church was within three minutes of the house. We had come unknowingly to the very parish. This impressed us naturally very much, and we made an offer to the landlord which he accepted, and at the same time wrote to the vicar and asked if he would approve of us becoming parishioners. We received the most cordial answer welcoming us in every way. So in July, 1914, we took possession, calling the house after our patron saint St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The title led to a slight confusion afterwards in the mind of the scouts, who invariably called the mother St. Elizabeth; this was varied by the coal merchant, who always addressed her as the Right Reverend; but those are mere details.

We must not forget Hampton—our old gardener. Of course we should not have had a gardener at all, but St. Elizabeth's was a wilderness, and the agent

said he knew "just the sort of old man to put it to rights." So Hampton came with his dear gentle face and broad Hampshire dialect, and as he saluted us, he said, "I comes at nine, and I works to five, and I charges two shilluns, if that baint too much." We certainly did not think it was an overcharge and we soon learnt that it was not, for Hampton proved to be friends with every one in all the countryside, and whenever we said we must buy anything, he always said, "Don't buy it, there's Mr. So-and-so, he'll give me anything I ask for." Bushels of mould, pots, woods, plants, sand, all that a garden requires, came trundling in on Hampton's wheelbarrow, given to him for love of the old man, and given by him to us. Huge nosegays of cut flowers came too, and finally all the cuttings taken from his own garden, which we ventured to think we could replenish when the time came.

But we grew to love that bent old figure, working so hard all day, and soon the children found out what he was, and when he appeared there was a war-whoop of "Hampton" and we saw them no more, unless it was in a passing picture of the wheelbarrow full of them. The other day the children were seen clustered at a stranger's gate, making extraordinary noises and peculiar signs. Their explanation was: "Mother, Hampton's in that garden, and we can't get at him!"

When we needed gravel, Hampton said, "Don't buy it, there's plenty here!" We looked around in surprise, but in a few hours there was a grave on a waste piece of ground large enough to bury us all in, and out came heaps of lovely red gravel and in went all the rubbish of the neighbourhood to take

its place! What Hampton doesn't know isn't worth knowing.

When the Fulham Mission moved houses we found ourselves in possession of a piece of ground at the back, with a surface of adamant. Hampton heard our lamentations at its hopelessness and said he would like to have a look at it. So the old bent country figure went down our Cockney street and he stood and surveyed the ground, then he prodded it. "It's all right," he said, and when we sarcastically asked him how much mould he would need carted there, he said, "It's all there, I'll just have a turn at it." In two days we had a heaped-up border all round, and Hampton said quietly, "Come some rain, and you'll get a nice level lawn in the middle with that shilluns' worth o' seed I've put in."

But the C.D.L. spirit was born in him, a spirit which cannot be conquered. When a difficulty arose, and we trembled for that bent old man, we would say, "Hampton, you *can't* do that," and he would answer firmly, "Yes, I can, it'll do my rheumatics good!"

We were made welcome at St. Mellitus Church, and although we had gone there expecting only three celebrations of the Holy Eucharist in the week, the vicar instantly altered it to daily, as he could rely upon a congregation always being present. It has been an immense gladness to us ever since to have any link with that church, any prayerful share in the splendid work which is being carried on. We were looked upon as the most extraordinary beings by most of the inhabitants, who seem curiously separated from the town life they are so nearly connected with; and to a great extent this has made

any possibility of work there more difficult; but we are hoping for greater developments in the future.

St. Elizabeth was never able to be a house only for Sisters. From its earliest days we were constantly filling it with visitors of all kinds: those in distress, or those needing rest. In fact, at times it became a very cave of Adullam. The history of its visitors is not for publication, but there are those who will bless its name always, and will look back to it as the home which enabled them to see all life from a better and more hopeful point of view, and, please God, that shall still be so in the future.

The tram-lines, which are the one drawback in our minds, carried us up at that time daily to Fulham. I say in "our minds" because this view was not shared by the dear old lady who remarked—

"Lor', ain't this lovely? You 'ave the garden at the back as a bit o' country quiet, and the tram-lines in front to liven you up." A form of "livening up" we personally could do without.

It was during that first year we came into close contact with the theories of fruitarianism, and after genuine study of its principles decided to give it a trial. Falling into the common error that a much larger quantity of nut meats, etc., must be consumed if sufficient nourishment was to be received, we so effectually poisoned ourselves that two of us will long remember the efforts of those early days. On one occasion, when we had dined together at Fulham on the Sunday, I telegraphed on the Monday from Hanwell, "Cannot possibly come up": a letter was returned, "Have been apparently drugged for twenty-four hours, what is it?" But experience brought wisdom and such excellent results that in

Garden of St. Elizabeth's, Hanwell.

due time we adopted it entirely as our manner of life, and could not now be induced to return to the former condition of things.

It was remarkable how soon we proved the possibility of doing away with all social prejudices and distinctions in our homes. In our Order from the commencement we had only one grade, all simply Sisters in Christ; but amongst our guests we found the same thing quite possible. Any one who needed to come, came, and was at once made welcome; and we have always found the atmosphere of love and sympathy entirely does away with any recognition or even realization of different grades. The question has simply never had to be considered at all.

Meanwhile our Associates were increasing in number, and we began to feel the necessity of making some provision for meeting them. They came to Greyhound Road and to Hanwell, but both localities were a little inaccessible to those who were the other side of London, and our accommodation at Fulham was too small to entertain any number at a time, so we sought a room that should be especially theirs, and found it at 36, Richmond Road, Earlscourt, in the parish of our Mother Church. We called it St. Mary's Room, and at once organized a weekly meeting there with a devotional address by the Sister Warden. It was appreciated from the first, and was a means of growing into far closer touch and co-operation.

Since that time, however, the whole house next door has been taken as the Associates' Hostel; and we have proved it to be of immense value, as so often our Associates stay with us there as they pass

through London. It was dedicated on the Feast of St. Francis, 1915. The tiny oratory, which is considered a specially beautiful one, contains our first altar removed from St. Catherine's; and other gifts adorn it which were given to us by our dear friends, the Miss Sparks, of Eastbourne, when they gave up their private chapel.

At this time also came the urgent need to settle the question of the children who were objects of pity in our parish work at Fulham. We were feeling so strongly within us the desire to prove the effect of small groups of children in Homes, instead of in large Institutions, that we were loath to send them elsewhere; and yet we felt we ought not to launch out so fast and organize so much. As our next chapter will be concerned with children only, we will not proceed with that narrative here, but it belongs to the history of this same eventful year.

In August the War broke out. We telegraphed to Sister Agnes, who was proposing to join in September, and asked whether she could come at once; she did so, and we held a council as to our own action. What were we to do, offer for service or not? We wrote to a friend of ours, the Rev. Reginald Moseley, of Chelsea, Senior Chaplain of the Forces, and asked him whether we should be of any use if we offered to help any Army Chaplain, suggesting that possibly other Sisters would do so also. He wrote by return—

"Your idea is excellent. I had Sisters to help me once and found them invaluable. Do go and see the Chaplain-General and offer your services."

This was far more than we had intended to do, but our Chaplain advised us to do exactly what

Mr. Moseley said. So we wrote to the Chaplain-General. An appointment was made at the War Office; but he thought we should be making a great mistake if Sisters left the parishes where they were at present working, and where he felt they would be enormously needed later on. We therefore obeyed his instructions, as he was in authority, and decided to relinquish the idea. We have always felt sorry that Sisters of our Church are not more represented in the spiritual side of war-work and in the R.A.M.C., but the responsibility ended for us when we had offered and had not been encouraged to do anything more.

That decision practically fixed our work at home for war times, because it decided the question of taking the children, and having once undertaken that responsibility, we were not free to offer for direct service again. We settled down for the winter with Sister Miriam and Sister Agnes in charge of the Mission work at Fulham, and the Warden down with the probationers and the children at Hanwell, going almost daily to London.

VII

THE CHILDREN

" For in yon haggard form He begs unseen,
To Whom for life we kneel :
One little cake He asks with lowly mien,
Who blesses every meal.
Lavish for Him, ye poor, your children's store,
So shall your cruse for many a day run o'er."

J. KEBLE.

IT is impossible to work any time in our great towns without being forced to wonder what is the best thing to be done with the children who have no proper care at home. The problem is more possible of solution when the parents realize the circumstances are impossible and aid us in finding the most desirable substitute.

This was the case with a young widowed mother, who had brought her two little girls up very carefully morally and materially, although they were unbaptized, and when owing to the father's death she was obliged to go out and work she felt extremely anxious about her daughters ; the more especially as the younger one showed signs of a consumptive heritage. She appealed to us, and we were extremely loath to send them to a large institution, as they were sensitive, delicate children. Their mother was most anxious they should be under our care : we could not promise that, but consented to have them down to St. Elizabeth's for a few

weeks' change while we considered what was best to be done. The little four-year-old son of one of our workers was already staying there. So those three somehow settled down and endeared themselves to us all so much, the thought of parting with them never arose, and the weeks passed by. Then four or five times a workman called at our Mission whom we had known at the time his wife was taken away to the asylum. We had been interested for a long time in his two dear little girls, the younger seemed still almost a baby, but Violet had delighted us with her gentle ways and loving motherly little heart, and we longed to do something for them. Their father begged us to, but still we hesitated to launch out into the deep.

One morning the Sisters said, "Mother, *do* take a little house, and have those other children."

The Mother's own heart said the same, but she replied, "Well, I will wait until I see a house to let; I am not going to hunt for one."

That very morning a board was put up in a house close by, as though to invite us to take it. We laughed, because it seemed as though it had known what had been said. In two weeks we entered in. The next magazine recorded—

"The move down was quite an event. They had only an hour's notice to quit St. Elizabeth's owing to unexpected events. What a bustle there was! Donnie's fish in the bathroom, Ellen's dolls in her bedroom, Pattie's doll's clothes in the wardrobe, all had to be collected, together with the contents of the toy-drawer, many and varied. Their appearance was rather like walking Christmas trees when we started at last, and as we were all

talking at once, the inhabitants of the quiet town were greatly interested. We hurried because it was raining, and in the middle of the road Ellen stopped, and in a voice of terrible tragedy exclaimed, 'Teddy Bear is left behind.' This *was* serious, but with promises to send for him soon we restarted, and a chattering, excited family, we reached the house. The first five minutes was a procession with war-whoops and cheers running round and round the playroom, for they had been so quiet for weeks at St. Elizabeth's, then followed bread and milk, and then they made ready with absolute glee to get into those lovely little beds with their inviting pale-blue blankets. Ellen slid down into her soft little nest with a wriggle of delight, then, peeping out with mischief all over her face, she exclaimed, 'Oh, we do want to go back to Fulham, we do!' which, of course, was witheringly sarcastic. Half an hour later the soft wings of sleep were closing over them, and as we bent over Ellen's bed and called her softly by her name, they were very sleepy eyes that opened, then she saw,—and with a happy whisper, 'Oh, Teddy, I'm so glad you've come,' she gathered the last arrival to her heart."

Baby Rosie was meanwhile in the Infirmary as she had conveniently contracted bronchitis, which meant other people would have the task of cleaning her up instead of us—an arrangement we did not regret.

Now it was so significant of God's goodness that the two first children should have been those whose careful bringing up meant that they were able to set a lead in sweet refined ways to all the other children who came; and we have felt that the

THE CHILDREN, 1916.

excellence of the tone in which we have always rejoiced was due greatly to that first start.

The house was very tiny, and it soon became impossible to take in more ; eight completely filled it. Then we moved up to St. Gabriel's, which had an extra room and considerably larger ones. That became so full that we turned the boys back to St. Michael's, and kept St. Gabriel's for the girls. In the winter of 1916 our little Peter came to us, and has ever since been a centre of interest. He was only eight months old, and when we first saw him, had been for eight hours absolutely alone with no one near him, and yet he put out his tiny arms and smiled. It was no wonder we coupled him somehow, as it was just Christmas-time, with the Holy Child, and the sweetness of his tiny little face was extremely suggestive. Peter was given into our care by his father whilst his mother went to an inebriate home. Peter himself ought never to have been !—but there he was, asking very loudly to be adopted and loved ; and that he unmistakably has been. His name was not Peter, by the by, but we gave him that name at his baptism. His mother has never been in a fit condition to have him back, and his father has always supported him. We had a tussle to rear him in the first year, but now he is always well and radiantly happy, and the centre of activity in the baby home.

Of course the question of illegitimate children at once confronted us ; and we adopted the course that we would only undertake them when we could also keep in touch with the mother, and be assured of her good progress. This has worked admirably, and we hope is a part of our work that may grow

more effective. In no case have we taken a child unless we have some guarantee of this kind. We encourage the closest intimacy possible between the mother and child, and maintain her responsibility. We have nevertheless tried most earnestly to lift the burden a little so that *all* the wages earned should not have to be used in her child's maintenance, and therefore this has entailed the supplementing of a large amount from other sources.

A considerable expenditure in clothes and food now may mean so very much to the future well-being of the child, and we reckon that in no case does a child cost us less than £20 per annum, without rent and taxes.

It would be far less costly to group them together in larger numbers, but this would entail Institutionary methods which we always studiously avoid. "Ours is not an Orphanage, is it?" one of the children cried, "but just *home*, only without our Mummies and Daddies."

One night, when I had just heard that the poor mother in the asylum was worse, I turned my steps, with some sadness, to the children's home, asking myself that old question, "How can one really ever compensate for the mother they have lost?" I passed up the stairs, praying in my heart, and entered the darkened bedchamber. I dimly saw two little arms stretching out eagerly from one of the beds. It was the child who was specially in my thoughts.

As I stooped down the little arms were clasped in a close embrace about my neck, and the little voice whispered, in intense love, "Mother, mother, mother." Surely in those words one found the answer to one's prayer.

What is the delightful atmosphere that has always attracted those who have seen our children? Is it not their entire *naturalness?* They are utterly unconscious, and informal. They are surrounded in our homes entirely by an atmosphere of love, and they expect nothing else. For this reason they are apt to hurl themselves into the arms of any associate they may chance to meet in the street, and one would occasionally like to see them a little more formal perhaps; but it speaks of a natural spontaneous growth in affection and freedom which we are loath to check. They do not know what fear is; but we may equally say they do not know how to be really naughty either. We remember one instance of a tear-stained face of penitence being rubbed very closely against ours, and a quick little sobbing breath which denoted some fearful crime. Prepared to receive some great confession we listened with awe for the answer to our question, "What is it!" "Mother," whispered the choky voice, "I had a bolster fight in the dark!"

At such moments it is difficult to keep grave. The sin was soon forgiven.

The influence upon each other in these groups of ten produces all the good one knows to be the result of large families in the natural home-life. The older children train the younger, and in training them learn themselves invaluable lessons of unselfishness, so this is leading us to plan our groups with a due appreciation of the fact. A child of six soon learns to dress the little toddlers of two; and the seeds of motherhood begin to be developed. The elder children of twelve and fourteen are excellent in their control of the ones of six and

inspire in them all the ideals they are themselves learning. We are discovering in these ways that in the past we have probably interfered far too much with the children under our care. Beyond providing them with healthy and happy surroundings it may well be that we have little to do but to watch their growth, and see their wholesome inquiries are answered. Nature provides us with a model of gradual development, intending surely that the younger should always learn most readily from those who are but a step older than themselves, and that in that way there will be no strain and no artificiality. It means also a mutual development. But we must not moralize too much!

We have tried home-teaching, and we have tried school; and we are inclined to think the latter is the best, as it enables our children better to take their place in life. But now arises a scheme which is very near our hearts.

We are realizing that the care of the young is going to be, in fact is, one of the greatest problems before us. We know that inefficiency amongst women is the cause of an infinite number of infants' deaths, and the cause of our girls growing up as inefficient as their mothers. We know also that there is not anything like a sufficient number of really qualified matrons. These facts have led us to consider the possibility of commencing from the age of fourteen a graduated course of training for our girls, by which they should be qualified at the age of nineteen or twenty either to take posts as efficient matrons, or to marry and become excellent mothers themselves. The scheme would thus meet a twofold need. We propose to give a child after

she has left school the charge of a room which should be her own tenement, and which she should learn to keep in perfect order; then when that is really effectually done, she should have added the care of one child in a cot in her room; and so as the years pass, her responsibilities are gradually increased until she should have two rooms and four or five children under her care, and should be deemed really efficient to take a post, or to have a home of her own in which her children should rise up and call her blessed!

At present by our system of "piece work," or our lack of any system, we make our children little drudges without awakening in them any ambition. But once put children on their mettle, and let them feel really responsible, and we call out all that is best in them.

What about the religious influence in our homes? Surely it is true here, again, that the best religion is that which is the natural growth of the Kingdom of God within their souls. We trust that the Blessed Spirit of God will Himself produce His holy fruits within their hearts and lives, if we give the Divine Life room to grow and develop.

Therefore, while we encourage, we strive not to *suggest*. As a result we find they bring to us all their beautiful loving thoughts of God, and feel sure they will be approved, as indeed they are, for we see in them their Divine origin. Providing them with as much actual teaching as they seem to desire, we have noticed all along that they themselves use their privileges more and more by their own request; and we have only to watch the development of their spiritual life.

Here again they teach each other; the little ones learn from their elders in a beautiful spontaneous way. It is to them now, thank God, the natural thing, as they are baptized, to love and serve God, and they for ever seek fresh ways of doing so.

A letter received from one of our little girls, who had been unbaptized when first brought to us, speaks for itself. It was left at the door on St. Bartholomew's Day with the words—

"Please, Sister, would you mind giving this note to Mother, but it is not at all important!"

The letter ran—

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I am just writing you a little letter for the C.D.L.'s birthday, it brings me back to three years ago. I really am, Mother, very thankful to you for being my God-mother. Fancy, Mother, I should never have been a child of God if you had never taken care of me. I should have been my own self only if you had not taught me.

"I am your ever loving

"ELLEN.

"P.S.—I always ask God to lead me into the right path, and He will, I know, if I try."

After one of our laddies had left us to enter the Gordon Boys' Home, we found out quite by accident that he had previously erected an altar which he had made from a packing case in a disused cellar, without telling any one but one of his little companions about it. It was covered neatly with a serge curtain, and he had collected a lace-edged cover and hangings for it, had made a cross from two

In the Hay, St. Margaret's, Heathfield.

pieces of wood, and had spent his very scarce pennies upon vases and candles at the "penny bazaar." It was all absolutely neat and reverent, and the beauty of it all was that it was a secret between him and God, and not paraded in any way. Who can gauge the reality and value of the prayers which had been offered there?

We are now preparing the way to undertake the care of more infants, because we know that is the critical need of the time. God in His good providence has sent us a Sister who has had twenty years' experience with children from birth, and it is wonderful indeed to feel the progress the poor little delicate mites make in her care. Our babies' home is at present at St. Gabriel's, 22, Uxbridge, Road, Hanwell, and is open to visitors at any time.

We are longing to hear of more who desire to adopt a child in our homes, paying half at least of its maintenance, and taking a practical interest in its welfare. Some of our children have friends who come to see them, others have not; will not more play the part of fairy God-mother to these little lonely souls? However much we care for and love them we know they must feel neglected when others have visitors and they have none.

The true test will come when our little Confraternity birds will have left their parent nests, and proved the value of these days in their contact with the world. We are too young to have seen that yet. But we look forward in faith and confidence, for we see such healthy signs of life now in our nursery days that we cannot but believe they shall result in noble men and women in days to come. God in His mercy grant it may be so.

VIII

VILLAGE MISSIONS

"How many an angel lies enthralled within rough human souls, needing only a Michael Angelo to set him free. The first step in the act is faith in goodness; the second, love of goodness; the third, employment of the heavenly weapons—kindness, and influence and prayer."

W. J. Knox-Little.

From our earliest conception of the work of our Order we had in mind the country villages. We had always realized that there was no place where the need for more spiritual aid was greater, or would be more welcomed. Of course the hope that we might one day be allowed to do something had to be set aside until we had a sufficient staff of trained visiting Sisters who could be spared from regular work to go on occasional Missions. Therefore we spoke little about it. However, in the beginning of 1916 we mentioned to a friend staying in the Hostel of St. Mary that we hoped one day we might be able to hold short and simple Missions amongst the village folk; she then told us it had been done by the Pilgrimage of Prayer. We at once inquired about these and attended a meeting organized by its leaders. At that meeting we had a talk with Bishop Hook, telling him we had been preparing to do similar work, would he rather we offered to work in conjunction with their movement, only of course

not being able to adopt their uniform? or would he rather we developed our own scheme? He thought the latter was certainly best, as there was, as he expressed it, room for both, and when we started we might co-operate by letting them know where we went, and they would tell us if Sisters were especially wanted anywhere.

A few months afterwards we were ready to start; we then obtained the sanction and warm approval of the Bishop of Kensington to visit villages to the west of London, and we sent a circular letter to several parishes, with a letter of recommendation from three vicars who knew us well. The first answers were amusing inasmuch as they represented extremes. One read—

"DEAR SISTER,

We should most heartily welcome you to this parish, and should be glad to know when you could come, and how we can aid you by preparation.

Yours sincerely in our blessed Lord,

_____"

the other—

"DEAR MADAM,

Your services are not required in this parish.

Truly yours,

_____"

It is scarcely necessary to add we preferred the former. We fixed upon Passion Week for this Mission, which was in the parish of Hayes, Middlesex, and went forth upon all untried ground. Our method

of campaign was to stay separately in the poorer houses of the parish with any one who would offer us hospitality, making the church-room our head-quarters for conference. There we met at 10 o'clock after our meditation in church, went through the list of parishioners kindly supplied us by the vicar, divided it into three or four sections, then proceeded on our several ways, visiting first of all the Church people and then house to house generally as far as we had time. We found with three Sisters we were able to accomplish about 150 visits in the mornings and between the hours of our afternoon and evening meetings in the church-room. The numbers attending the addresses in all cases rose steadily each day. We tabulated the result of every visit in a notebook, and these were copied into a summary book which we gave the vicar when we left. Thus any fact worthy of notice was reported to him. It was a matter of great interest to note whether those we called upon subsequently came to the meetings, and of course we found, when they did so, that they recognized their own Sister as they came in, and in a few hours we were regarded as old friends. As a whole our welcome was simply wonderful; the grievance was not that we should call, but that we had not called, for it seemed to spread through the village like wild-fire why we had come. In very few cases were we refused an entrance to the homes, only in one or two instances in each place. Once when we had called at a house, and stayed a while, when we entered the second after it, within half an hour, the good housewife said, "Was it you that was at my daughter's just now?" "Yes, it was I." "Ah, she told me 'ow nice you was!" Unless

the good daughter had scampered round with the news the moment we had left she could scarcely have done so, but it proved to us how keen they were.

We had intended to direct our Mission entirely to the poor; but in this case again we found it could not be. The more educated people besought us to come to them too. So it resulted in visiting in every road we could, no matter what the class of house. On one occasion we knocked at a house we thought was a poor one, and found, when the door was opened, a beautiful old oak-panelled room, it was an antique cottage valued by some people from London. We hesitated and said why we were in the village, and added that we did not know whether they would care for us to call.

"I was so hoping you would," was the response; "our charwoman has told us all about your Mission, and I was coming up to the hall to hear you." We stayed there an hour, having the most deeply interesting talk about the Faith.

We wondered, of course, how we should get on with regard to the different denominations, specially as we imagined the Sisters' habit would repel many. We found no difficulty about that whatever; the Dissenters and the Roman Catholics welcomed us just as much as the Church people, and came along to our meetings. On one occasion when we had discovered that what appealed to the people most in that place was a very clear instruction upon the Catholic position and the Sacramental life, we were led one especial evening to give a really drastic address upon the position of the English Church. To our certain knowledge that night there were

Roman Catholics, Wesleyans, Congregationalists, Salvation Army, and Agnostics in the room, and we spent nearly an hour, feeling we were holding their attention, in demolishing the *isms*, and relegating Rome to its own lands! At the end a woman gripped us by the hand, and said, "Thank you, Sister, with all my heart for that straight talk." "Well," we answered, naturally concluding she was one of us, "I only hope we did not put it too strongly —but I think they know we love them."

"I'm sure we do," she said. "I'm a Wesleyan Methodist myself, but I shall thank you always for all you've said."

So in this way we have learnt that love to the brethren can exist very comfortably together with strong, clear speech. *But we must love all who love our Lord in sincerity, whatever denomination they belong to.*

We have left each village wherein we have at present held Missions with the pressing invitation from clergy and people to come again, and to come and *stop*. That is what we hope we may one day be able to do. Pressing as the invitations are to work in the great city, and we have four parishes in London eagerly begging us to come, we yet feel the more pressing need is in the villages. Think how single-handed these vicars are! Then remember that in many cases they have been in that parish for twenty years or more; their roots are in the soil, their whole interest and heart is with the people whom they have baptized and married, yet no one realizes more than they the value of fresh visitors, and fresh teachers to accentuate that which they have so earnestly desired to teach themselves. We all

know that there are a certain number of people in every parish who when they do not agree with the vicar think it is owing to a little peculiarity of his which they must put up with ; and it does some good, even in our tiny humble way, if we come down and lend our aid to driving in some of those nails he has hammered at so long.

We are absolutely and entirely against the ministration of women within the actual church building ; but this does not preclude us from teaching in the halls and homes, and sometimes a woman, even though a Sister, will be listened to, and may say things which they will not brook from their poor long-suffering priest !

We see also the possibility of holding meetings for the children in the three-days' Mission. Children can always be got together, and we know many instances when the seed has been received in childhood which has borne much fruit in the adult life. Then too we know that to include the children will be an additional attraction to the mothers, and in that way we may awaken more interest in many of their hearts.

One touching instance in our experience was of one old lady who had neglected Church-going for years, with the inevitable neglect of all her personal religion. When we visited her, she told us what a good man her husband had been. " Never missed his church." This gave us ground to suggest she should not be such a disappointment to him as she must surely be, and we begged her to get across any way to the hall. She came, and came again. Going home from one meeting on the arm of the vicar's wife she said, " Well," striking her breast,

"that hit me just here because it was so true. I shall come back to church, and I'll sit in my dear old man's own pew."

The fact that God has given us a Sister who has the gift of a most beautiful and cultivated voice has aided us very greatly in this work; many have, we know, come to "hear the Sister sing" who probably would not have come at all otherwise, and few could hear those songs without being touched at heart.

We have up to the present time been limited by the weather, and to the months of the summer season, but we are hoping to be able to overcome this difficulty, and extend the work into the winter months as well. It may be that we shall not make great progress in any case until the women are more at leisure, for at present it is almost impossible to find them at home at all.

But we have tested the scheme and found it altogether workable; and that is a very great point. When, please God, the present war-time is past we may find an immense field before us in this work, and at any rate we are sure that it commends itself to many, and the day may possibly come when our Sisters will be known best by their itinerating work in the villages of our land.

IX

OUR ASSOCIATES

" O ye, who taste that Love is sweet,
Set waymarks for all doubtful feet
That stumble on in search of it.

" Lead lives of love : that others who
Behold your life may kindle too
With love, and cast their lot with you."

C. Rossetti.

It was in 1915 that we began to realize that the work of the Confraternity was not to be only amongst the poor, but that it had a mission to the educated as well. One of the great results of the War has been the breaking down of conventional religion, an inevitable result. A theoretic faith seemed to suffice for many who were comfortably settled in the general condition of things, and possessed all they really needed in material ways, but when the tragedy of war came to shatter their homes, to claim their best-beloved, and to fill their minds with new perils, it was natural that the soul should awaken to its dearth of vital faith, and that they should cry out " Where is God ? "

We always have to keep before us the truth that Christianity is not a mere religion of ethics, but essentially a life, and that a supernatural life. We have lost sight of that as a nation ; we are in our sermons and in our common belief endlessly

platitudinous, and it is little wonder we have sunk to a conventional standard of religion that claims little and effects little. To believe vitally in the seed of supernatural life placed in the soul at baptism is to enter into the experience of a gradually increasing supernatural life, with a supernatural faith in God and His Providence wherever and in whatever manner it manifests itself—a faith, in short, which will tend to the ever-deepening union with God which is the ideal of our holy religion. This is what we mean when we speak of the realization of the love of God ; not that we should believe in that love as an objective fact, but that we should have faith in that love by the putting forth of the action of our will to grasp it as our own personal possession, and to experience it in ever-increasing power within us and in the sphere of our relationship towards others.

One who has the Confraternity most deeply at heart expressed its mission as illustrated by a pool into which a stone was dropped causing circles to form in ever-extending rings. " Only," she added, " it was in this case, not a stone, but a Heart, and that the Sacred Heart ! "

It is a beautiful thought for us to cherish that God may have chosen us to be a shrine wherein that Sacred Heart may manifest itself, and ever touch more and more souls with its warmth of love, as our influence widens through the coming years.

And so we began to realize this as the number of our Associates increased, and hearts were opened to us with the expression of deep soul-hunger. We woke up to the fact that already we were beginning to be looked to for help, because of the

attraction which lay in the name of the Confraternity. It was not teaching only that was needed, not the promulgation of one especial school of thought, so much as the manifestation of the Love of God in and through the human heart. Of course to us the true manifestation of Love is through the Catholic Faith, through the blessed channel of the Sacramental Life; but it is also true that the evangelical effect of that Faith is through the living witness to its truth and power. Now as of old they will take knowledge of us that we have "been with Jesus," [1] and by that knowledge will be led to find Him for themselves.

We intended that our Confraternity should bind together those who had found these truths effectual in their own experience. We learnt, however, that many souls were to be led to us because they desired to find such for themselves, and looked to us to teach them how. Were it possible to speak of the secret experiences of such as these, we should have a wonderful history to relate; but those to whom this volume will be especially dear, will be able to fill in blank pages from their own interior knowledge, and will be amongst the number who say, "Thank God that I was ever led to know the Confraternity of the Divine Love."

Now after five years we have a company not great in numbers,[2] but very great in soul; those who are ever deepening in the experience of prayer and love, and who are themselves going forth to bear their witness of a deeper life in God to those who are failing from the lack of just such knowledge. The realization that the Sacred Heart has been placed

[1] Acts iv. 13. [2] About two hundred and fifty.

by the Incarnation in the very centre of our being. is our inspiration and our strength ; the circles will enlarge ever more and more.

"That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them," [1] was illuminated upon our first altar, but far more is it engraven within our hearts as our great missionary power.

We are growing beyond the thought that some Christians are gifted with a missionary spirit and some are not. We know that the missionary spirit is simply the overflowing of love which increases beyond our capacity to contain it within ourselves. God's love is literally a heart-breaking love, and as our heart is broken the glorious river flows forth in its healing and life-giving power to reach other souls. God cannot use us effectually while we are still quite comfortably able to contain our religious experiences within ourselves. It is proof that the religion is only human in its substance ; the natural must always *break* when it comes into contact with the Divine, and God gathers up the fragments so that nothing is lost and uses them for the feeding of other hungry souls ; thus it is that we give them ourselves to the uttermost, multiplied by the power of Christ which possesses us. All illustrations must fall short of the reality, for God is too great to be contained in any ; He needs all our powers of expression, even then we can hardly express anything of the joyous and infinite and supernatural manner of His ways, for they are "past finding out."

But we see in all this the ideal for our Associates, and have watched with joy the working of it out in some faint measure in practical ways.

[1] St. John xvii. 26.

When our Blessed Lord made so much of the widow's mite, He overturned all our conception of values, and made the standard of worth depend upon the motive of love. Now we have seen this glorious motive breaking through the atmosphere of the Confraternity as a beam of light made visible by the vibration of the particles in the air. Tiny deeds have thus been seen in the light of divine Love. Garments made for babies; stamp forms filled up with pennies; wages carefully saved until personal needs must have claimed practically nothing: these have produced a veritable beam of light which gleams down the history of the last five years. Then we see those who had greater possessions stripping themselves of all, unknown to any living being, in order that some children might be saved, or some gift be given to God—deeds of spiritual heroism wrought without the slightest outward sign. We see here and there a life lived in the monotony of ceaseless household activity in order that others may be set free to obtain greater spiritual privileges. We see that interior courage needed by one more advanced in years who for the first time sets forth upon a path of absolute sincerity, and towards the attainment of true self-knowledge. What do all these things stand for, but expression of that new conception of Love which the Confraternity exists to bring into our midst? Few have entered into it with any heart earnestness and remained unchanged. It is too vital to produce no effect. God grant it always may be.

How much we owe as an Order of Sisters to the prayers and love of the Confraternity it is indeed impossible to say. Without in any way striving to

spoil our ideal, they have furthered our efforts in every direction. The position is not that which is usual in relation to a religious Community, for in most cases particular friends become Associates of the Sisterhood. In our case the Order is a development of the Confraternity which possesses its own Council and Associates. They may or may not take an interest in the Order according to their individual desire. And since the Confraternity exists first for the purpose of prayer only it is not of any obligation for the Associates even to help forward its own mission work, or work amongst the children. These are mere natural outcomes of the desire to put love into action. But the bond between us all is so very great that we appear to stand together as a corporate whole; and no one is quite able to distinguish where the independence in constitution lies.

Theoretically the idea is that the Confraternity should organize and govern its own works, and if possible support them with the money dedicated to this end, whilst the Sisters give their services and carry out the actual details of administration, the voluntary workers of the Confraternity co-operating with them in every way. This in a very great measure has been the method of our work, except that up to this time the larger portion of the finance has been also contributed by the Order from its own maintenance fund. We are thankful that at the time we were able to do so. The rule affecting money necessitates that no subscription should be "begged" for, in the sense that it ceases to be a free-will offering and partakes of the nature of a compulsion or expediency, but that it should

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FREDERICK BROWN'S GRAVE.

be genuinely given first to God, and then for the general needs. This precludes also the holding of any entertainment or sale of work on our behalf, inasmuch as such an enterprise may mean the collecting of money and not any individual's personal gift. No service in the whole of the Confraternity or Order is paid for; it is a free offering rendered without claim for payment, and as such is offered to God. All that is necessary in clothes, or actual requirement of any kind, is provided by the Confraternity for its workers, as the Order provides for its individual daughters.

Such is our position, and the outline of our Associates' work; but, thank God, they are branching forth in many works separate from our own. We rejoice from time to time in welcoming back some of our number who have gone forth to serve God in quite other spheres. We have missionaries in Africa and Borneo, and we have workers in almost every branch of spiritual activity at home, as well as those who represent us at the Front.

Frederick Brown, whose name stands upon the earliest pages of our history, fell at the Front in the midst of R.A.M.C. work on May 16, 1915. James Langdale in July, 1916. Both were amongst the most devoted of our members. We have still two others, Hamilton Hingston and Frank Wells, who are fulfilling Frederick Brown's injunctions, when he wrote, "Tell them to hurry up and come out here, to take my place as C.D.L. representatives when I go home to rest." He was expecting the leave which had not come in eighteen months, and he went Home to his rest through a stray piece of shrapnel. May God grant them His eternal peace!

His college friend and colleague, Gerald Seward, knew his loss to be immeasurable, but he labours on in Africa, striving to fulfil their old ideals, and urging us on to the establishment of our long-prayed-for "Order of St. John of the Cross." That must come, because its seeds have been sown in sacrifice.

Our women are represented in the V.A.D. work in France: Stella Safford has inspired us with the record of faithful quiet devotion to her work. Our nurse Associates have been out as far as Gallipoli. All are one glorious whole, we at home "tarry by the stuff," they hasten across the brook; domestic workers, Sisters, Mission priests, all are one, all aim at one ideal, the realization of the Love of God on earth.

X

HEATHFIELD

> " What shall we do, o'er whom the unbeholden
> Hangs like a cloud with which we cannot cope;
> What but look sunward, and with faces golden,
> Speak to each other softly of a hope ? "
>
> FREDERIC MYERS.

WHEN we were seeking, in 1916, a cottage in the Heathfield district for rest and quiet, we found a house which charmed us, although it was larger than we intended to take. It occurred to us that possibly we might have some of the Associates down in the summer and thus use the extra rooms. We took it in May, and issued invitations from that date. Then we thought we would attempt informal Retreats if we could get a room erected in the garden in a short space of time.

This was carried out most effectually by a local builder, and proved to be perfectly delightful as a devotional room. Gifts were given, the crucifix, statues, etc., and an atmosphere grew around it from the first day it was used.

We were also impressed with the enthusiasm of the first retreatants. The early morning walk to the church, the open-air feeling of the Garden Room, the quiet of the gardens, and the wonderful exhilarating air of Heathfield, all appealed immensely to

those who came; and the conviction was strongly expressed that there was value in the fact that the addresses were given by a Sister who could speak from long experience of work amongst souls. This was of course such an entirely new departure that it would incite criticism, but the first results gave such encouragement that we felt it was well to continue.

Two Retreats were held, and were well attended. Then we decided to develop the proposed Chapter for the Sisters only, into a Summer Conference, inviting Associates and friends. This was held in August, and we overflowed three houses and rented single lodgings as well.

The spirit of that first week will always be remembered. We were all more than happy, we simply brimmed over with joy, and many are still speaking of the blessings received. It was all delightfully informal, and full of fresh air: meals out of doors, and with five windows and a door all wide open we may almost say meetings out of doors also. With one more Retreat the summer closed. Four Vocations for our Order were realized, as well as the fresh light and hopefulness which poured in upon every soul.

This summer, towards the end of which we are writing, has been even more remarkable. The illness of our dear Sister Agnes made it impossible to contemplate any summer gatherings here, where she was, and where absolute quiet was essential. We had given up all idea of them. On the last day she was with us on earth, she, who had been the life and soul of our gatherings last year, pleaded that they might be held this year in spite of her illness,

saying she would give no trouble whatever. We knew that would be true enough, but we could not consent, knowing how impossible it would be. She quietly passed away in her sleep that night. As soon as the last services were rendered, we determined that she should have her heart's desire, and we issued invitations at once for a Summer Conference, and took the house next door which she had set her heart upon. Naturally many letters were received from those who had made their summer plans and could not alter; but in spite of only three weeks' notice, we again more than filled the three houses at our disposal, and had to hire rooms outside.

How we made St. Margaret's ready in a week only those four who did it know. The workman and his boy papered and distempered it throughout, and we scrubbed, stained floors, and made fifty-five curtains *somehow*. We ransacked second-hand shops for the delightful shabby old chairs which Sussex knows so well how to produce, and all the firms of furnishers and upholsterers seemed to vie with each other to produce exactly what we wanted at a moment's notice. In all that week there was not one hitch, and we were cool and calm and collected as though we had been in for years when our first visitor arrived, irrespective of the fact that the last paint pots had only just disappeared round the corner. The one of the four who cannot be called a Sister, so calls herself the "Staff," sat down and breathed deeply, and remarked—

"Well, any way I have learned how the C.D.L. gets into a house."

Then we threw ourselves into that wonderful second August Conference, even more engrossing

and more heart-stirring than that of 1916. The following article from the *Church Times* but dimly conveys an idea of it.

SUMMER CONFERENCE, AUGUST 4–11.

"In these days of stress and strain the mind does not always appreciate the confinement of time and space which an ordinary Retreat involves. We are very tired, and long for fresh, bracing air.

"The week at Heathfield, where the Sisters' Retreat Houses are 500 feet above the sea and amid lovely scenery, and the time-table has happily combined hours of silence as well as hours of converse, has been to many of us a time of extraordinary refreshment. The Conference has been open to friends as well as Associates, and the syllabus has been wide enough to embrace the work of the Church far outside the immediate interests of the Confraternity. Indeed, the subject has been the spiritual crisis of to-day, entirely apart from any especial or local interest. Pressure of work, for which no substitute could be found, prevented the Rev. E. W. Haswell and the Rev. Ernest Higgins being with us as was anticipated, but the Rev. Willoughby Carter, Chaplain of the C.D.L., and the Rev. P. G. Propert, rural dean of Fulham, gave us most valuable aid in those subjects of theology and scriptural study and the relationship of the Church towards sociology which needed experts. The Rev. Mother of the Order of St. Elizabeth spoke from twenty-five years' experience of evangelistic mission work; and Miss Hankey (hon. sec. C.D.L.) and Miss Hind (Lincoln Diocesan Training College) also contributed excellent

By kind permission of Mr. Weston, Eastbourne.]

HEATHFIELD CONFERENCE 1917.

papers. We were fortunate also to have with us Miss Beckwith, who has had long experience in S. Africa. Indeed, three of our number had had years of experience in the work overseas. We can scarcely estimate the far-reaching results of such times of mutual intercourse. Governed as it is in the case of the Confraternity by a wonderful spirit of unity in faith and the firm belief in that form of Evangelical Catholicism which inspires a great desire to reach out beyond the narrowness of bigotry or condemnation of those who may differ from us in non-essentials, the keynote of the whole seemed the deep longing after a personal realization of the love of God and the desire to manifest that love wherever our vocation may require us. A stranger who entered the dear 'Garden Room' of St. Mary's Retreat, where all the meetings are held, said afterwards, 'I had almost done with the Church of England, but what I heard last night has completely changed my whole mind. I learned a heap of things and am longing to learn more.' Retreats will continue (D.V.) throughout the rest of the summer."

It is noteworthy that this article brought us letters from all parts, seeming to signify that even the short account of the work carried with it something of the health-giving atmosphere. Away up in Staffordshire a working-man read it, all unknown to us, and said, "That gives me hope there's love and life left in our Church yet." *We* know there is abundant love and life, but we need to carry it far more earnestly into the heart of the nation, that the people may know it too; and we have all of us awakened by our intercourse with each other at Heathfield to a far greater realization of the

underlying principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ fully experienced in all its transforming power.

All August and September our houses have been filled with guests, and now we have to turn them away as October comes into view, for we must return to work in London. In all cases our visitors leave with the words, "Please God, we shall be here next year." Rich and poor have met together in the tenderest and most sympathetic intercourse. The sound of limb have wheeled the lame to church in bath-chairs, the weary have gone back with fresh vigour, the despondent have regained faith in God's dear providence. A munition superintendent in daily contact with ten thousand women has said more than once, "One day at Heathfield sets me going for two months,"—and yet no one can ever describe exactly what it is that moves our hearts so keenly, and makes us all so happy. It is really the love of God which seems to have fallen especially on this place, and we who have been called to keep the machinery going are the happiest of all! Another wrote, "That week was a nearer approach to the early days of Christianity than anything I have ever heard of."

What remains to be said? We are left to wonder what we have to arrange for next year. Plans must be made, although we are all so conscious we cannot tell what may have befallen us by then. It is perfectly evident that we cannot accommodate many more at one time, and we are equally certain more will want to come. So we are proposing to hold three Conferences with different speakers, and a quiet week between each. A full programme will, we hope, be issued in the spring. Those whose

opinions are of far more value than our own see in the future of these Confraternity Conferences great possibilities. Certainly the Church has never organized them in the way that interdenominational societies have. It seems that they are of considerable value, and if we can combine a healthful out-of-door atmosphere with an increase of spiritual knowledge and experience, one can imagine nothing more ideal.

It is one of our greatest desires to combine the study of sociology with the spiritual problems which the Church has to face. The two subjects have, we all feel, been too divided in the past. The *via media* needs to be established. At any rate knowledge of our varied points of view is always an immense gain, and when the studies are carried on in a strong atmosphere of prayer, when the days are divided into hours of silence and hours of converse, we learn to see things, we may well hope, from a far higher point of view. We desire to see them in some measure from the standpoint of our Blessed Lord.

One of the informalities that mark our weeks is drawn from the fact that we do not know clearly till the last moment all the interesting souls who will be with us. Therefore we are elastic in our programme; and each time we have "discovered" those who have helped enormously with their contribution of thought and knowledge. This adds greatly to the spontaneity and life of our meetings: in the same way the opportunity given to discussion has proved of immense value.

There are still many who, when asked by their friends to come and stay at Heathfield, reply—

"With Sisters? Oh, I can't stand the rules."

It is our own fault, we have earned for ourselves the reputation of being hedged round with rules, and endeavouring to hedge our friends. But why should we? Rules were made to be our friends, not our masters; and even so we need not thrust them upon our dear people who have no intention of entering a life of cloistered discipline. Therefore we have only one rule for our visitors, and that is that blessed habit of silence after Compline, and in the early morning; and we do not hesitate to say that this rule is valued immensely by all who come. During the regular Retreats silence is observed and desired by all; but not at other times. Is it not well to consider, especially in these days when the mental strain is so keenly felt by all, whether days of entire silence are as healthful as they are in normal times? A certain amount of silence is of unquestionable gain, but there is also need for relaxation of mind by intercourse with other kindred souls, who perhaps may be able to help and cheer us exactly where we most need aid. Therefore for these present abnormal times it seems to us a blend is needed, silence *and* intercourse, and we have found the two have been extremely appreciated by all.

God alone knows what is before us in the coming year. We can only prepare now in deep questioning of soul; entire response to God's revealed Will, and a living faith to grasp all He desires to effect within us. If we have been allowed to help any souls, by ministering materially to their needs, so that they may have been enabled spiritually to drink in more deeply of God's store of riches, to His Name be all the praise and glory for such a privilege.

CHAPTER XI

THE ORDER OF ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

"I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To live sweet lives in purest chastity."

TENNYSON.

THE year 1916 found us with eight novices and two probationers, in addition to the Mother. By our Rule, it is decided that after the noviciate, simple professed vows should be taken for five years, before the solemn profession. The two senior novices were prepared to take the simple vows: therefore within the Octave of the Feast of our Patron Saint, November 19, the first profession was held in St. Matthias' Church.

The simple beauty of the service appealed to all present, and we were so thankful to be allowed to hold it in the parish church, which has been so essentially our Mother Church, and around which by one of the strongest tenets of our Order we always desire to gather.[1] We were cheered also by the kindliest letter from the Bishop of London sending his blessing to all the Sisters.

This profession was significant not only for its

[1] It is interesting to note that this was a strong point of St. Vincent de Paul's.

being the first, but by the fact that three professed Sisters constituted us an Order, and that therefore it marked a considerable advance in our existence. There is not always a very clear idea in people's minds upon these matters, it may therefore be as well to mention that simple vows can be received by a priest, and are dispensable by the priest who received them; solemn life vows are received by a Bishop or his delegate, and are dispensable only upon certain conditions, which we need not here specify. Some of the great Orders only take simple vows at any time, but the more usual procedure is that they should lead on to solemn life vows. Now, an Order or Community is such by virtue of its having at least three professed Sisters. (Three being necessary for the taking of votes.) It is formed by those who desire to be thus banded together under common vows.

Furthermore, it is necessary for the discipline of the Church that such Orders or Communities should be recognized authoritatively by the Bishop of the diocese in which their Central House is. But it is not by recognition that the Community becomes a Society; it is the Church's official recognition of it *as* a Society.

Now, it has been the custom in all centuries for Religious Orders to work on for a considerable number of years to prove themselves worthy before they receive episcopal recognition. Generally speaking the Bishops need to be assured upon three points. First, that there is a sufficient *raison d'être* for a new Society to be formed at all; in the second place, that the rule itself inspires confidence; and thirdly, that there is reason to believe the Society is sufficiently stable to continue after its founder has

passed hence. We can readily see the wisdom of these precautions. Therefore when we stated just now that we had received a kindly letter from the Bishop of London it must not be inferred therefrom that it was in any way an episcopal *recognition of our Order;* we clearly understood that we there then only entering upon our probation, and were only too glad to be allowed to work in the London diocese and test by time the value of our existence.

But we now felt the time had come when we must gather under a central roof, and establish our Mother House. St. Elizabeth's was not large enough, and we had been suffering much from being separated from one another during the training period. Even the Hostel of St. Mary, intended for Associates, was being mainly occupied by Sisters.

There came the necessity for a great decision. We yearned towards the idea of a block of flats amidst working people's dwellings, so as to be essentially in the midst of poverty. There was no individual house of an adequate size in any of our poor districts; but we saw the possibility of adjoining flats. This appealed to us so strongly that we even applied to our old Twynholm Mansions to know what could be obtained. We found, however, that these small flats and houses are in tremendous demand, and that if we took several, as we should have to do, we should be merely selfishly increasing the overcrowding of poor districts. Our duty was obvious: less than a mile away large houses containing the twelve or thirteen bedrooms we should ultimately need for the Mother House were standing empty, crying out for tenants. We felt that we ought to take one of them. We inspected 94, Redcliffe Gardens,

then in a deplorable condition, and made an offer for it to the owner. She accepted us as tenants upon the conditions we proposed, notably that in asking for a reduced rental we should be responsible for all interior repairs. Our splendid workmen took it in hand, aided by engineering knowledge contributed by our Chaplain, and the present very satisfactory condition is the result.

The whole of the repairs and furnishing were given as her profession gift by Sister Agnes; and we entered the house on Monday, January 22, 1917. All the extra gifts of crucifix, statues, lamps, altar linen and lace, lectern, missal and Bible were given by our generous friends, and we could not be thankful enough for every dear token of God's love and providence.

Our magazine recorded—

"The Mother House of the Order of St. Elizabeth of Hungary was completed and blessed for the service of Almighty God upon February 10. It was with deeply thankful hearts that the Sisters welcomed the Chaplain, several Priest-Associates and friends to the Service and subsequent gathering. The Service itself was most impressive, commencing of course with the Dedication of the Altar. Then the procession of Priests and Sisters proceeded throughout the house, visiting every room, with prayer, incense, and the sprinkling of holy water; typical indeed of our ideal in a life of worship, prayer, and purity.

"The Te Deum was sung solemnly on the return of the Procession to the Chapel. The Rev. Willoughby Carter, Chaplain; Rev. P. S. G. Propert, Rural Dean of Fulham; Rev. Ernest Nicholson, Rev. Ernest Higgins, Rev. H. C. Green, were the priests present,

and a kind letter of regret for absence was received from Mrs. Anderson on behalf of her husband, the Vicar of the Parish, who was, at that time, holding Missions at the Front.

"This Hostel is thus named rather than called by the usual title Convent, because we are most anxious to maintain the principle that we have 'no certain dwelling-place,' and no property of our own. We may recall the fact that St. Francis, in his original rule, instructed his brethren that they were never to live in a house which did not belong to some one else, even if they only paid a nominal rent. We have adopted this rule, and trust that we may differ from our brethren the Franciscans inasmuch as we may never depart from it. Likewise we are following the original principle of St. Teresa, in decreeing that we must never be more than thirteen Sisters in one house: and that will limit the size of our dwellings."

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the value of careful training in the first three years after entering the Religious Life. There is absolutely nothing more effective than the home to bring to the surface points of weakness in character; and when the peculiar difficulties which arise from lack of natural kinship in Communities are added to the ordinary wear and tear of daily life, there remain few points of a character, good or bad, which are not revealed! But the discipline is magnificent; the opportunity to attain to supernatural grace and virtue invaluable, as all who have truly benefited from their noviciate can testify.

Likewise the mere idea of being a Religious, or even the actual Vocation, does not mean that aspirants always understand how very much there is to learn

of God's methods in the progress of the spiritual life, or how necessary it is to rise above a religious impulse to a firmly founded life of prayer. Few really appreciate how essential the formation of *character* is if we are to be indeed the instruments in God's service He would have us to be. If these great points are neglected before profession, it is seldom likely they will be fully realized after. We see here the wisdom of deterring novices from entering too soon upon outside activities, although that may be a necessity at times. This seems hard when much has been done in former days in connection with their parish church. It may lead to a sense of being "set back"; but only those who desire to find competent workers know how essential this setting back is until the foundations are more firmly laid.

Now, all this had been more or less impossible during the previous year, and one can only humbly thank God that much in His selection of those who had joined us mitigated against the difficulties; but henceforth it need not be the same. We look forward to some quiet and well-organized times, when by God's blessing we may strengthen our foundations upon every side.

We have a great desire, however, that there should be nothing secret, nothing mysterious in our life; that God's dear people outside the cloister may not feel in any way estranged from us. Our chapel is open to them at all times; how much more our hearts and sympathies! There seems to be a great prevalence of the idea that friendship with a Sister must mean something quite different to the general conception of friendship, something, in short,

wholly cold and unnatural. Whence comes this? Is it not from a want of understanding of what friendship really is? Where affection is merely emotional and human, set upon the gratification of self-love, we may well regard it as outside the pale of the Religious Life; but where it is founded upon the sympathy of a really spiritual attraction, when the whole aim and object of it is the mutual uplifting of character and mind and soul, then we must welcome such attraction as a most real gift of God. In this way one can conceive of the tie which binds a Religious to her friends as a very blessed one: of mutual benefit, the one bringing the result of a wider outlook upon life, and the other the communication of a more spiritual ideal maintained by her friend's greater privileges in Religion.

Surely we are set free from many difficulties of social life, not in order *only* to spend more time in prayer, though that is our great privilege, but also that we may be "more at leisure from ourselves" to outspend ourselves upon others.

If we want to realize the beauty of a spiritual relationship we cannot do better than study the chapter thereon in St. Teresa's *Way of Perfection*. There we see the difference between all that is emotional and harmful, and might grievously destroy vocation, and that which is for the uplifting of those who are attracted to one another in the love and will of God.

But beyond these greater friendships there are all the lesser privileges of intercourse which may cause a Religious House to be a centre of blessing in the district where it is placed. We desire assuredly that all should feel welcome to come with their

needs at any time. We do not welcome those who would come for idle talk. Our life must be strenuous and real, and at all times engaged on things which essentially matter, hence there are visitors who must be discouraged; but how much more do we rejoice in every possible service that can be rendered in an hour of need!

We recall one delightful occasion when the Mother was returning from a two days' absence, having by letters learnt that two sisters had been called away upon an errand of love.

"Anyhow," she thought, "Sisters M. and J. will have been left to keep things going at home."

To her surprise she found the house quite empty; and shortly after Sister M. appeared with an apologetic but unmistakably humorous expression. "I am so extremely sorry, Mother; but Mrs. M.'s cook's baby was born unexpectedly, and as no doctor or nurse were available, they came for us!" Who were gladder than we?

It has been thought by some, when they have witnessed the even tenour of our life continuing day by day, that we must be fairly settled financially. If this means that it is thought by any that we have in our possession funds for the future, or a settled income either for ourselves or for the children, it is an absolute mistake. Our position is exactly the same as it was in 1913, a dependence upon God alone for the supplying of our daily bread: except that whereas then we reckoned our needs in figures of ten, through the increase in our numbers to about fifty all told, we now need to reckon in hundreds. We have never yet seen one year's provision in the bank, more usually we can only see a month or so

ahead; but nevertheless we have never been in need, and there has never come a quarter yet which has found us unable to pay up all our bills. But it must be clearly understood our needs are ever increasing; every distressing case we hasten to help, every child saved, represents an addition to expenditure. It must also be realized that the majority of those who join us give up their means of income to do so, and when a Sister possesses any money it is put absolutely into the common fund, and passed on to the Confraternity if it is in need. This year the Order has contributed five hundred pounds to the support of the Children's Homes and Confraternity Mission work.

Therefore if all that has been done has appealed to any one through these pages we pray that they may send their offering for the carrying on of this work—offering it, first of all, to that Heart which beats in sympathy with every heart which suffers in the world.

We see before us, by the mercy of God, a very blessed prospect; in spite of mountains that have had to be climbed or in some cases laid low. Such matters as these exercise the spiritual life; we would not be without our trials. If we have been assailed in the past, we shall certainly be assailed in the future if we are worthy of the Name of Christ. But of what matter is this? All that concerns us is that we should deserve that name which was given to us the other day, "The happy band of pilgrims." Deserve it by our witness to the joy of our religion, by our unity in love, and by the clear witness that "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

XII

SISTER AGNES

"'Gone!' said the Poet, 'and about to be
Forgotten: oh, how sad a fate is hers!'
'How is it sad, my son?' all reverently
The old man answered. 'Though she ministers
No longer with her lamp to me and thee,
She has fulfilled her mission. God transfers
Nor dims her ray: yet was she blest as bright,
For all her life was spent in giving light.'"

JEAN INGELOW.

IT is fitting that this chapter should be a memorial of the life which closed as far as this world is concerned with the completion of our first five years. It might be well called the memorial of a great and wonderful friendship. The most perfectly unselfish friendship we have ever known.

It was early in 1902 that she came down to stay at Oxshott, with the express desire of learning more of the Catholic faith. That year revealed to me the sterling truth and depth of her character. She resolutely steered her way through seas of prejudice, difficulty, and doubt: never faltering, although always hesitating until she was compelled by conviction to act upon some new light. She would often lament her long hesitations, and what she described as extreme timidity, but we who looked on knew that from the moment she was fully convinced that any course of action or article of faith

was of God, she would never again swerve or go back from it.

It will be readily seen how such a character won respect upon every side. Together with this mental and moral strength there was the brimming-over kindliness of heart which has ever made her so dear to all who really knew her, and which gathered round her friends amongst the ranks of the poor as well as the rich who cannot speak of her to-day without tears brimming from their eyes. That rare gift of being able to anticipate every need of others before they realized it themselves was hers to a marked degree. Very many instances became accidentally known to us of this, though we kept the secrets sacredly.

On one occasion, long after pew rents were for the most part abolished, she discovered one of her dear old friends was "put about" by finding her usual seat in a church so often taken by others. The old custom prevailed there, and she was obliged to resort to the "free seats." Without appearing to have noted the fact at all, this was put right by a seat being taken for her, and given to her by the sidesman without any explanation; but the old dear guessed, for she said sententiously, "That's Miss S—— again, I know." It was silent little deeds of this sort that led an author to write to her one day and say, "It's you again, I suppose! If you don't take care I shall be putting you into a play some day. It is you people who do these deeds and don't talk about them that we all respect so deeply."

Must we not also, in sketching the foundation of her character, record its most delightful humour?

How absolutely any description would be inadequate without it, all who knew her would well realize. If she were ever misunderstood it was most often because you could detect no glimmer of a smile when she would propound some most outrageous statement, and we all know how some good people can only interpret literally, however hyperbolic a statement may be. She would preserve her gravity by the hour amidst convulsions of laughter upon every side.

We remember one instance when her host, whom she knew most intimately, had embarrassed us all with an outburst of irritability over the untidiness of a relative. His visitor was anxious to relieve a strained situation, so for over an hour she quietly and imperceptibly placed obstacles of every conceivable kind in his path wherever he went, hastening to clear them with apologies whenever she saw him approach them, as she knew he must. Only she could have done it, and succeeded in restoring him to his normal and delightful amiability. Her appreciation of other people's witticisms was just as keen. She hoarded "character studies" in every shape and form, delighting in clever books designed for children, and drawing out to the uttermost the capacity for humour in all around. Often have we had to threaten to leave her, when during old "tramps" in Devonshire, delightful days we enjoyed for many successive years, she would carry on a conversation with some quaint old soul, with the keenest relish for the answers she succeeded in extracting from them. Then for years afterwards she would suddenly say, "Do you remember that old woman at Hey Tor who told us her son had lived for weeks without any lungs at all?" or

"Oh, I wish we could go again to the inn where they hung all their legs of mutton up over the front door."

We look back in vivid memory to the years of early companionship when we did much together, and passed through the events recorded in the first chapter of this book. She was the one who proposed to give half her time to the Settlement. Then came the week when I knew she must be told of the coming break through the realization of my vocation. It is difficult at this time to write without deep emotion of all those days. Perhaps even I had not realized how deeply our friendship had entered into her very soul; but when I told her, she received it with the same quiet strength with which she faced everything. I was staying at her house, and we talked it over in her room at night, quietly and without visible emotion.

"When will you go?" she asked.

I reminded her that I had an obligation to refund a hundred pounds borrowed in preparation for work I was then doing. "So you see," I added, "I cannot go until I have earned and repaid that." We parted quietly, and I went to my room and slept. In the early hours before dawn I awoke, hearing her in my room.

"I cannot sleep, dear," she said; "but I am not unhappy. Only I think I can give you up to God best if I pray about it by your side. May I stay here a little while?"

It revealed more than she ever showed again what it meant to her. I left her next day, and in the evening I received a letter—

"I cannot bear that you should wait at least a

year before you are able to obey the call. I can pay that hundred pounds, and so set you free. Oh, I do want to be really happy in giving you up to God. I know I shall only gain you more, in spite of the human loss."

She might have had her dearest friend near her for another year ; but no, she loved God best, and made the sacrifice for Him. When that hundred pounds was refunded to her some years later, as I knew it could be, it was given again for God's service, as she would not take it back for common use.

When in 1912 the call to found the Confraternity was received, she and Frederick Brown were fittingly its first Associates. She was the first friend to whom I confided the greater call. Well do I remember sitting upon the shore at Heyburn Wyke and telling her all I then could see of the future. She confessed that she went home to go through what she expressed as " a bad time of it." Believing absolutely as she did in my sincerity, and that I could only follow what I believed to be right, she yet feared greatly I was making a mistake. Yet she never showed anything of this to me at the time. She felt I was certain about it all and had enough to bear, so she would keep her fears to herself. So she gave me all the help she could, and trusted that somehow God would bring good out of it all. It was, of course, immensely characteristic again of that cautious, clever brain of hers, that was not easily moved by enthusiasm until she could see a reasonable basis upon which it could rest ; and that especial trait in her character has been of immense service to me all through. How eager she always was, when things proved to be God's will in the end, to blame herself

for her slowness of perception; but she never gave herself credit for the *sureness* which was such a tremendous strength to her friend.

Then came the year of her own unexpected vocation. Of course to her friends it was not unexpected, but it was to us: and she and I were the only ones after all who really knew. It is customary for those who look on and see a great friendship with a Sister, to suppose that there is an attraction to the life. It is looked upon as a foregone conclusion, but, as a matter of fact, she and I never thought she would be called to the Religious Life. She had for all these previous years been the sister at home to care for her aged mother; and she had never any intention of doing more after her death than help us in our work as splendidly as she had always done. Yet some months after God called her mother home her views about her own future were completely changed. She came down to me one day at Fulham, and told me she had decided to devote her life to Mission work; still anything further did not suggest itself to me. "Shall you take a flat at Earls Court?" I asked. "Oh no. Please, Mother, let me come and live with you," she answered. I was speechless at the moment, and then said, "Do you really mean it?" "Oh yes," she continued; "I could not work anywhere else."

So it was settled that she should come as a worker. But later on, as God's will was more clearly revealed to her, she saw He was calling her to the entire dedication of a Sister's life. As we have recorded, she joined us at last suddenly on the outbreak of the War.

If we had ever wondered whether she would be

able to adapt herself to the new life, our fears were soon dispersed. She was the leader in every enterprise, in the forefront of every endeavour. At first, when she only visited us, she used to confess that she walked through the cemetery in order to get a "bit of green" instead of the slum streets; but later on she entreated me to allow her to live in the Fulham Mission instead of in the easier work I had planned for her at Hanwell. She learned to love the scenes of poverty and squalor, and cherish the clinging, grubby hands of the little children that hung all about her as she walked along.

It was she who put her whole soul into the "garden," until she made the squalid yard of 34, Tasso Road beautiful with a riot of flowers; and although now we think the low-lying climate so near the river, with incessant, self-sacrificing work, was too great a transition from a life of ease in the high air of Hampstead, how little reason we had to think so then, when all her old friends, seeing her happy face, told her she looked ten years younger!

It was characteristic that it was only then, after twelve years of intimate friendship, that we discovered she had very high certificates for teaching. It had never appeared to her worth mentioning. Now the idea grew that we would lay the foundation for a school for our children and perhaps see it develop into something really useful.

It was in this that during her last six months of activity she found her keenest delight. When we felt she was working beyond her strength she said at once, "I don't think I am, but whatever you take from me, leave me the children." As soon as we were convinced she was really far from well, all

else was taken off her shoulders but this, her great delight. She lived with them in the Hostel of St. John ; and they were dearer to her than she could ever express. She told me afterwards, when her work was for ever laid down, that often when she felt too worn out to speak to any one, the touch of those children's arms would be to her a comfort beyond words.

Then in the spring of this year, after consultations with doctors had availed nothing, just before Passiontide we made a firm stand : no work at all was to be done for three months. She pleaded, but she was carried off to Heathfield at twenty-four hours' notice, and told to settle down and rest in the place she loved best of all. We never thought for one instant that it was really more than extreme debility needing absolute rest. In three days she was so much worse that I had to telegraph for another Sister to come down. Then the doctor's fiat was given. It was beyond human hope.

It was all so sudden, so incredible, so mysterious ; but somehow, some day, we should understand. *And she could not at present know.* There was just the faintest hope that with the will to live and the hope of recovery the disease might be thrown off. And so we fought with fresh air and sunshine pouring in at the window across which her bed was drawn—with all the gifts of flowers and fruit that were heaped upon her from all her dearest friends, and above all with her dear, grateful, happy spirit that never failed to triumph over every setback. How often, as we saw the disease advancing by some sign she did not herself understand, we watered the pillows behind her back with our tears—she never knew ! Until

we were certain, we would not take away her hope. Then one evening, when it was useless longer to make any pretence, she said quite quietly, "Mother, I am not getting on, am I?" I crossed to her—

"No, darling, you are not."

"Will it be very long?"

"We cannot say at all."

"I should be glad—if God is willing—if it might not be very long." Then her old love, which was the strongest human thing she knew, made her think instantly of me instead of herself.

"Except for your sake, darling Mother—how selfish I am! Oh, but you will not mind *very* much, will you? I shall always be so near. You do believe, don't you, I shall be nearer than ever?" I assured her I did.

"I believe I shall be able to do more for the Order on the other side. I expect that is why God wants me to go."

From that time we talked always about the other world whenever some fresh thought struck either of us. She lived for over two months more, months that will remain in my own memory, and in the memory of the two Sisters who nursed her so devotedly, as being some of the most beautiful of our lives. Her illness was without pain of any kind, and with very little discomfort. Her spirit grew more and more radiantly happy as the weeks passed by. She never ceased to take the keenest possible interest in all that passed, reading the paper to the last and planning with me every detail of our life. God was so near to her that she simply waited to see Him face to face, she felt there would be scarcely any conscious transition.

And so it came to pass. As we have related before, she had been speaking of her desire not to hinder the coming of our guests. That night she looked so worn and white that Sister Alice said, "We do not want to leave you alone at all to-night, Sister."

"Oh, but you must," she answered. "I can touch my bell. I am all right; tell Mother I am just going quietly to sleep." We did not cease to watch, but without her knowledge. We were always within sound of the slightest movement. At four o'clock she was raised on her pillows, and said, "Thank you, that's so nice." At four-thirty they fetched me—she had passed beyond.

Oh, Sister, Sister, with what unspeakable yearning did we follow you in heart into the Presence of your Lord!

It is a record of a life of love, the most perfectly unselfish love we have ever known. Surely it will be to us for ever the foundation upon which our Order rests. Our first Sister to be professed on earth, our first Sister to represent us in the Courts of Heaven.

XIII

TO-DAY

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways."
>
> TENNYSON.

AND as to-day we stand and look back over the way we have come, what do we realize we have learned?

We remember receiving a letter a few days after the first Office of the Confraternity had ever been said in church, May 16, 1913. In it the question was asked, "What do you feel about Thursday?" Our answer was, "We feel the Confraternity has started now upon its own existence, and we are its servants." That feeling has increased with the years as they have passed. We humbly believe God wills the existence of this Society, and we must follow where He leads. The only mistakes we have ever made have been when we have allowed our human energies to press forward without waiting for His manifest leading. It must be always remembered that we should have given up long ago did we deem the Confraternity or Order to be merely the outcome of human organization.

But we have learnt more than this, and far more than we can express in the space of a chapter of this little volume. If we ever believed five years ago the day had come when the Church was called

upon to stretch forth hands of love through the barriers of conventionality, we believe it infinitely more so to-day. How great a change has come upon the world in those intervening years! Now surely we stand in days when God is calling forth groups of men and women in vast numbers for great and especial works; and, let us mark the fact, for work undreamed of in our past conceptions. Is this great tide of fresh endeavour to pass by the Church and leave her on one side? or are we not to see her take her place in this new army of living force, and send forth her sons and her daughters to prove their prowess in a hundred ways? It must be so: we know it will be so. Men may laugh at her as at an organization which has become obsolete in use; but they will yet come to see new vigour rising from that ancient source which may arrest and convert them with its supernatural power. The manifestations of this new vigour will come in many ways, but the strength of each separate offshoot will bear the marks of simplicity and reality: and those are precisely what we have missed in the past.

There is a story told of a man who setting out to build a house became so involved in his scheme of scaffolding that he lost his reason and attained no end. Short of this disaster, we may have in the past endangered the effectiveness of our work by too great an engrossment in organization to the detriment of vital and experimental results. We are realizing that to-day; and there are many who believe the truest way to win the world for Christ will be in a return to methods such as those of the preaching friars; at any rate to lives of absolute simplicity and poverty, and setting forth of love

and self-sacrificing labour for no earthly return whatever.

While we reverence and honour the cloistered life of those who are set aside for prayer, we yet must see a great possibility lies before such active orders who will live amongst the people, not behind high convent walls and a barred gateway with heavy locks, but with open doors of ready hospitality, and with a Rule so simple that it will not repulse any one who approaches us for help. Nay, we must rid ourselves of all self-consciousness, letting the gracefulness and humility of the Christlike life be the mantle and veil which shall clothe us and preserve our recollection; with no undue effort towards an imitation of such graces.

We must cast ourselves upon God with no worldly wisdom in our selection of those whom He would lead into our ranks, or with any consideration of what return in service they will bring to us. The love of money can be fostered within convent walls as well as in the world. We must not gain, but give according to this world's standards, if we are to find our treasure perfectly in the life beyond.

All this we see clearly before us; and more than ever do we perceive the necessity of quiet reality in our personal experience of prayer. In this respect our early training must greatly count; and many a lesson may we learn from our Evangelical companions in the faith. Prayer, and the study, intellectually and devotionally, of the Holy Scriptures, must be laid as foundations of purest gold. The Catholic who apprehends this is raised immeasurably beyond the mere formalism of party spirit, and will be better prepared to attract other souls to Christ.

There is room in our conception for those who can never go forth to ardent evangelistic work, to spend all their days in prayer and study with few additional tasks : and they would so bring a treasure of wealth into the heart of such great Orders as we long to see established.

Again we look forth, and we see the possibility before us that if we do not arise as a Church to cherish and educate the thousands of children now lying at our gate, motherless, fatherless, or without a home, the State will do so, and will do so with promptitude. We shall thus lose once more the opportunity that is sent to us by God. We want young women with the love of motherhood—that sacred instinct—who will come forward and, not for "greed of gain," but for the love of Christ, offer themselves to succour these little ones for Him ; we want others, lonely narrow hearts, to awaken to a greater blessedness in life by pouring forth their money into such coffers of gold as an appeal for charity presents. Yes, impoverishing themselves that many may be fed.

This is the "socialism" we long to see ; not the evasion of the gift of birth, not the ignoring of the good of education, but the sharing of all in the inspiration of a common love.

If these are called "impossible ideals," we stand to say they are not impossible, for we see souls around us who in increasing numbers are realizing them every day ; only where we have seen them breaking forth singly in individual hearts, we want to see them springing up as flowers in the Kingdom of God, broadcast on every side.

God grant the day may never come when we shall be able to answer the question so often asked,

"What is your special work?" We never want to sink into any channel which can be narrowly defined. Our work is to meet the human need with the expression of God's love. Where others are doing this we can point the sufferer to them, where we must ourselves be God's instrument we must act in faith and promptitude. We can never say, "This is not our work," for who can say where God may need us next? And just as the Spirit of God ever works in order and never in confusion, so may we trust Him to guide us in our central organization, so that while we are ready to go forth on every side, we may yet be controlled by a rule which will bind us in unity and be to us a strength.

Above all, *it is so simple*, just to get above the world and its conflict and its clamour into the mountain-top apart with God: to maintain that it is upon Him only that we must rely, heedless of all the confusion of tongues that advise us from the world. If our Councils are the outcome of deep prayer, our precepts are the precepts of Holy Scripture, our ideals the simplicity of the life in Galilee, we shall never find the confusion that awaits us in the archives of human organization and device. It is when we seek our wisdom first from the minds of man that we often go astray. If we search for the solution of each perplexity in the silence of our cell of prayer we shall soon experience the unity of thought and strength of conviction which is surely the result. If we take our standard from the pages of Holy Writ, we shall have little doubt as to the higher way.

To purify our lives from worldliness and the reservations of conventionality will be to throw us

as a new force against all the inroads of the enemy in our midst. We know this is true of the individual, it must be true of our societies too. We must begin again, with new methods, and new standards, and new practices which are not new at all, but only new to our immediate generations ; we must turn not only to the Early Church for purity of doctrine, but also for simplicity of life ; and the literal dependance upon Almighty God for wisdom, guidance, and the supply of all our needs. The early Christians bore witness with such effective power because they lived as Jesus had lived, poor, and single-hearted in their love: not gaining, but giving of their all; not grudging, but burning out as living flames for God.

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THE END

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